UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

On Becoming Orpheus:
The Examples of Francis Bacon and John Milton

BY

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Richard Cunningham

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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ISBN 0-315-88434-7

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DEGREE: Master of Arts

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1993

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Rich C

9847 - 77 Avenue
Edmonton, AB.

October 1, 1993

EPIGRAMS

O Sing unto the Lord a new song:
Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.

Psalm 96.1.

Eros, Orpheus, and Daedalus are calls,
not memories.

Jerome Deshusses, The Eighth Night of Creation

Shrewd devil, you know very well that God
pardons singers no matter what they do,
because he can simply die for a song....

Nikos Kazantzakis, The Last Temptation

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled ON BECOMING ORPHEUS: THE EXAMPLES OF FRANCIS BACON AND JOHN MILTON submitted by Richard Cunningham in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

David Gay
Dr. David Gay

Linda Woodbridge
Dr. Linda Woodbridge

Julian Martin
Dr. Julian Martin

September 29, 1993

To Joy
For Whom I never could resist looking back

And

To Sue
(Whose helpfulness has not gone unnoticed)
and Sarah
For both of Whose sake's a new song must be
sung

Abstract

Francis Bacon and John Milton read the myth of Orpheus as an allegory speaking of the rise and fall of civilizations. While this reading of the myth was common in the Renaissance, both Bacon and Milton move well beyond common readings when they identify themselves with the figure of Orpheus. Bacon and Milton recognize Orpheus' ability to use poetic eloquence to create a society in accordance with his own vision of the truth. In this thesis I argue that Bacon and Milton each identify with Orpheus, and I attempt to show a further similarity in the work of the two men.

I suggest that Bacon and Milton were engaged, each according to his own lights, in advancing political agendas in even their most seemingly apolitical works. For both, this means the assumption of the Orpheus archetype as a personal identification because of their identical reading of Orpheus as a figure of necessary centrality in his society. For both this assumption has powerful implications about what constitutes civilization. For Bacon, according to my thesis, civilization requires a scientific (or empirical) philosophy at its centre. For Milton, civilization requires a particular form of an essentially unmediated Christianity at its centre. Both claim God as their and their civilization's ultimate authority. Both assume the Orphean role of central spokesman for their vision of what civilization must become.

Acknowledgements

I must begin by thanking Prof. J.F. Forrest for encouraging me in no uncertain terms to write a Master's thesis and for directing me to my thesis supervisor, Dr. David Gay. To Dr. Linda Woodbridge I owe a debt of thanks far greater than could be repaid in a book of acknowledgements. In addition to offering always specific and insightful, if sometimes painful, advice on the thesis itself, Dr. Woodbridge deserves more credit (or blame) than anyone for my decision to continue in the Graduate program during a period when I would have liked nothing more than to cut and run. Dr. Julian Martin contributed a great deal more to this thesis than is even hinted at by the official title of "committee member" and the degree of assistance provided by Dr. Martin renders ludicrous the unofficial appellation "third reader." For all his practical advice on thesis writing generally as well as the theoretical advice specific to this thesis I am especially thankful. I must also thank Dr. Rick Bowers for his constant encouragement, Cliff Lobe, and Heidi and Dale Jacobs for their enduring patience, good spirits, and all-round performance as indeed good friends in times of need. An unexpected debt of thanks must also be paid to my mother, Julie Cunningham, who babysat Sarah much more than I thought anyone other than I would have to do. Pride of place has been reserved of course for my supervisor, Dr. David Gay, who at one time or another did almost everything everyone else who deserves my thanks has done (excepting babysitting), but who also did so much more. If any part of this thesis is worthy of a second glance, it is in large part thanks to Dr. Gay.

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Introduction

I came to this thesis by way of a love for heroic and mythic stories. I did not know in which direction my interest in those stories, frequently referred to as 'the classics,' would or even could take me in the context of preparing a Master's thesis in and for a Department of English. I only knew that as part of my course work I was having to do a lot of reading that came dangerously close to driving me away from a lifelong love of reading, and that I wanted to avoid that at all costs when I prepared for writing my thesis: thus, the desire to incorporate into a Graduate English thesis stories from Ancient Greece.

The thesis has not really answered to this initial desire. I have not re-read those 'classics' which originally caught my attention with, like the song says, "tales of brave Ulysses." Nor have I devoted as much time to reading other ancient texts as I had originally, naively, envisioned. But creating this thesis has answered a number of other desires that I might barely have recognized, or not recognized at all at the outset.

I have read a great deal of material on the subject of myth. I now understand the idea of a story being true without necessarily being a depiction of "actual" events. I understand, for example, how it can be said that the Bible is true without ever asserting that any one particular event described therein had an historical occasion. To elaborate on this understanding would require a work at least as long as is the present thesis, and I do not intend to provide this elaboration for that reason, but also because I suspect that I have only lately arrived at an understanding that very many people have long possessed.

I have long been, this thesis has taught me, a literalist. We have all heard that Missouri is the "show me" state, that people there must see something with their own eyes before they will believe it. I dare say I have been a "show me" person for most of my life. Data accessible through the senses I would accept, everything else was 'mere metaphysics' which I would readily have joined David Hume in 'consigning to the flames.'

But it is not wholly accurate to say that the thesis proper has taught me that not all truths are of the sort that hurt when they fall on your toe. The archetypal poet, Orpheus, is active yet, and his influence has been great in showing me the error of my ways. The genesis of this thesis was the myth of Orpheus. From there I would move ... elsewhere. I am as tempted to write "forward" as you were to read it, but I believe that the very nature of myth lies in an omnipresent quality that denies the sway of linear time. This denial is the essence of the Christian God's assertion that He is, was, and always will be. Hence it is not accurate to presume that as a myth's inscriptions move forward in time--in this sense, Bacon's myth of Orpheus is ahead of Golding's, as Milton's is ahead of Bacon's--the myth itself does likewise. It does not. Orpheus, somehow, is, was, and always will be. At least, he will continue to be as long as there are concerned poets trying to convince their audience that theirs is the likeliest truth.

Truth is the enduring quality. In myth. In life. Because this is so, truth can change its shape as we evolve (not necessarily progressively) through time. Hence, it is no less true for Aristotle that matter falls earthward because it is essentially 'earth-stuff' than it is for us that matter falls earthward because it is attracted by the gravitational force exerted by the earth's comparatively larger mass. Both accounts describe the same phenomenon, both do so in very different ways, yet both are true. Why this should be so is the subject for another discussion. That it is so is the power behind myth.

This is a power recognized by both Francis Bacon and

John Milton. These writers identify with Orpheus because his is the myth that most specifically makes an articulate individual the central figure in the creation of a society. Bacon wanted to create a society in which people thought empirically, and by an inevitable process of such thinking would come to see the rightness of the rule of the British Crown. He seems to have been halfway successful. His empirical model has indeed carried the day well into our own time; but the British Crown effectively lost its claim as the centre of power when Charles I left London on January 10, 1642, never voluntarily to return there as even a free man, much less an authoritative monarch--only a generation after Bacon's death!

Milton wanted to create a society in which every individual was capable, intellectually and politically, of reading her or his own Bible her or his own way without threatening the "institutions of society [with] the anarchy of individual consciences" (Hill, 316). As Bacon wanted to make his audience empirical thinkers whose empiricism would cause them to follow the Crown, so Milton wanted to make his audience "properly qualified Christians" (Hill, 316) whose liberty would cause them to choose parliamentary democracy. It would seem that, again like Bacon, Milton was at least partially successful. But whereas Bacon's political goals never materialized, it is in the realm of politics, widely-considered, that Milton's partial success lies. The Royal House has all but fallen and Parliament has long been Britain's real governing power. If we are not "properly qualified Christians" nonetheless the individual liberties for which Milton so eloquently strove underpin virtually all the world's democracies.

In this thesis I provide an over-view of the way in which Orpheus was popularly conceived, outside of Bacon and Milton, in the English Renaissance. I do this by recalling in detail the myth of Orpheus as it appeared in one of the most influential translations of the time, Arthur Golding's 1567 translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses, and by offering a much briefer look at the treatment Orpheus receives from the pen of probably the most dominant figure in Renaissance literary criticism, Sir Philip Sidney. Then I examine the philosophical program of Sir Francis Bacon, connecting it *via* Orpheus in particular and mythology in general, to his political program. Finally, I argue that it is Milton's particular Christianity which demands he be as active in the politics of his day as we know him to have been, and that as with Bacon Orpheus provides Milton with a paradigm according to which the individual can employ his literary talents to reconstruct a (political) landscape.

Bacon and Milton has each in his own way become the Orphean figure with whom he identified. When I started examining their individual relationships with Orpheus, I did not know what I would find. I did not expect to discover that either of them had met with as much success as each has. (Although it is unfashionable to make such sweeping statements:) They have changed the world. To Bacon we owe many of our habits of thought, and perhaps much of our understanding of the world. To Milton we owe many of our arguments in support of personal freedoms, and perhaps the governance those freedoms demand.

What connects Bacon and Milton more powerfully than their religion, their nationality, their politics, or their temporal proximity is their recognition of the role to be played in human society by articulate expression of truth. What this thesis attempts to convey is a sense of the similar way both men acted on that recognition, by using Orpheus, the figure who creates the civilization he envisions, to attempt to create the society they envisioned. The greatest connection between Bacon and Milton, ultimately, is the fact that each saw himself performing the role of articulator of the truth. What enables us to see this connection is an examination of the way each man reveals this personal vision in his employment of the myth of Orpheus.

Chapter 1

Golding's Ovid, Ovid's Orpheus, and Sir Philip Sidney's "Right Poet"

The historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, writes in Myth and Reality that contemporary commentators on myth have been returning to an acceptance of the term "myth" as it was "understood in the archaic societies, where ... 'myth' means a 'true story' and, beyond that, a story that is a most precious possession because it is sacred, exemplary, significant" (1). H. and H.A. Frankfort see myth as

> a form of poetry which transcends poetry in that it proclaims a truth; a form of reasoning which transcends reasoning in that it wants to bring about the truth it proclaims; a form of action, of ritual behaviour, which does not find its fulfilment in the act but must proclaim and elaborate a poetic form of truth. (Frankfort, 8.)

These two definitions are both highly appropriate in the context of a look back at the use of the myth of Orpheus in the work of Francis Bacon and of John Milton. As I read them, Bacon and Milton both engaged with the myth of Orpheus as Frankfort would have one engage with a myth. Both saw the myth of Orpheus as exemplary and significant, and as a true story inasmuch as it is the story of how one person can affect his society.

Just as we look back on the examples of Bacon's and Milton's adoption of Orpheus, so did Bacon and Milton look back at the classical era in order to advance their own remarkably similar projects. For Bacon, mythology provided a vehicle by means of which he hoped to position himself to enhance his project for *The Advancement of Learning*, which in its turn would advance the cause of the Monarchy. For Milton, mythology provided one of the most effective vehicles by means of which he could position himself to perform his self-appointed task of reforming society according to his understanding of the word of God. Each man saw his task as being concerned essentially with the proper philosophical education of Britons in order that they be qualified to understand correctly the important social, political, and historical role of themselves and their nation. By identifying the similarity of the role of 'caller-to-(intellectual)-arms' assumed by each man we also identify a similarity between these two Renaissance Englishmen and him who so often looms largest in their adaptations of classical mythology: Orpheus.

Before examining the use to which Bacon and Milton put Orpheus, I believe we would benefit from a fresh exposure to the myth *per se*. Such an exposure will serve two purposes. First, it will call to our attention aspects of the myth which we might have forgotten, or never have known. This is important because it emphasizes the second purpose served by such exposure: by re-familiarizing ourselves with the entire myth we position ourselves to appreciate those aspects of the myth which either Bacon or Milton chooses to emphasize most heavily as each adopts the myth for his own reason. By emphasizing these aspects we will be able to see the importance of myth in the work of each writer as we come to realize that although each focuses on different aspects of the myth of Orpheus, yet both use Orpheus for the same end.

For Bacon and for Milton Orpheus is a complex archetype. He is an archetypal communicator: a philosopher for Bacon, a poet for Milton. He is an archetype of civilization, an educator and speaker of truths. Although each Renaissance writer gets there along a different path, both arrive at the same understanding. Orpheus is a centrally important figure in his society whose eloquence draws an audience to him to hear the truth. Thus Orpheus becomes a figure with whom both Bacon and Milton identify in their similar quests to reform what they view as God's chosen nation according to their own particular vision.

Fresh exposure to the myth of Orpheus will come to us here by way of an examination of Arthur Golding's 1567 translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses. I have chosen Golding's primarily because of its date of publication. I want to look at the myth such as it appeared in the English language of the period in which Francis Bacon and John Milton were alive because I believe that our language has evolved into a more prosaic and more empirical or scientific language than was the English of the seventeenth-century.[1] This has important ramifications for the study of a myth as it was used in the seventeenth-century because it was then that this modern linguistic model began to assert itself. Obviously, Bacon is widely held to be the originator of this way, the empirical way, of understanding reality.[2] I will make so bold as to say he has succeeded. One of the reasons for his success is his reach back into classical mythology for a means of communication harmonious with the not yet empirical thinking of his contemporaries. I realize this is overly simplistic. I am not saying that before Bacon no one had even an inkling of an empirical understanding, nor that without Bacon we would all still be "gaining" our knowledge of the world only from authoritative texts. But I do think Bacon played a major role in the reformation of thought that has come to be most widely understood by the term "empiricism." And I further believe that this empirical or, to speak more broadly if somewhat more loosely, this scientific way of thinking puts us at greater distance than is commonly acknowledged from the early modern era of which the Renaissance is the first cultural manifestation. Therefore, a Renaissance translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses, Golding's, has been chosen as the benchmark text for the present study.

It may at first seem less obvious why I should choose between Golding's 1567 edition and George Sandys' 1626 edition, since both can rightly be said to be Renaissance translations. Sandys' produced his translation well after Bacon had penned his Wisdom of the Ancients and even further after Bacon had formulated his understanding of the myth of Orpheus as we see it in other of his earlier writings (see, for example, *The Advancement of Learning*, 1605, Works 6:145-47; 6:300 [American ed.]). Furthermore, although Carole Mayerson uses Sandys' translation to demonstrate Milton's familiarity with the myth as it would have been known to his contemporaries, this in no way argues against his knowing Golding's translation. Indeed, it would be more incredible to suggest that someone as widely read as Milton, especially in the classics, had somehow missed Golding's translation than to say that he would have known it well. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to prove that Bacon or Milton was intimately acquainted with Golding's Ovid, I call attention to Margaret Drabble's conclusion that Golding's "translations are clear, faithful, and fluent, and his Ovid was known to Shakespeare" (Oxford Companion, 400). Surely no one could reasonably argue that scholars whose reading habits were as voracious as Bacon's and Milton's are known to have been would have been unfamiliar with a text that "was known to Shakespeare."

My final reason for choosing Golding over Sandys is a selfish one. I find that Sandys' translation is much less enjoyable reading than is Golding's; it is less accessible; it lacks those virtues which Spenser's editor, E.K., saw in that poet's *Shepheardes Calender* of being "round without roughnesse, and lerned wythout hardnes, such indeed as may be perceived of the leaste, [and] understoode of the moste" (Spenser, 17)--which virtues Golding's edition of the Metamorphoses most assuredly also possesses.

For these reasons I have chosen Golding's translation over any others, to use as a genuinely Renaissance example of *Orpheus*, with a counsel that Golding was seemingly attempting to be, in Margaret Drabble's word, as "faithful" to his Roman author as he could possibly be in his translation. In other words, Golding's Orpheus is a less mitigated Orpheus than is Bacon's or Milton's. As I said above, each of these authors focuses on specific aspects of the myth as being of greatest interest to himself. Why this should be so will become clear as we consider the social concerns and the Orpheuses of Francis Bacon and John Milton. Commencing with an examination of Orpheus in Golding's *Ovid* thus has the advantage of giving us a benchmark text from which to proceed into more detailed examinations of the way Bacon and Milton each comes to envision himself as an Orphean figure. Therefore, I now turn to Golding's translation to remind us of the myth of Orpheus.

* * *

The first information the Golding/Ovid myth gives us is that Hymen, the God of the Wedding Feast, has answered Orpheus' summons--"He came in deede at Orphyes call" to attend the wedding of Orpheus to his love, Eurydice (10.1-3). Orpheus hailing an audience and being attended to is a theme we will see repeated on a grander scale later in the myth. Although Hymen answers Orpheus' summons, he does not do what a god of the wedding feast should do; he does not

> sing
> The woordes of that solemnitie, nor merry countenance bring,
> Nor any handsell[*] of good lucke. His torche with drizling smoke
> Was dim: the same to burne out cleere, no stirring could provoke. (10.3-6.)

Here we are introduced to yet another important element in the myth of Orpheus, the power of song. Hymen, god of the wedding feast, does not "sing/ The wordes of solemnitie" that may of themselves, by the power simply of being spoken, provide a "handsell" of a good future. We are straightaway apprised of the import of Hymen's reluctance to sing: "The end was woorser than the signe" (10.7).

---

[*] handsell: omen, sign

This "woorser" end begins to take shape immediately with the premature death of Orpheus' bride Eurydice. Roaming through a field, accompanied by a "trayne of Nymphes to bring her home" Eurydice is bitten in the ankle by a serpent whose swift acting poison kills her upon the instant (10.7-10). Orpheus mourns her death "sufficiently/ On earth" before he turns his attention to the realm of the "Ghostes departed" where he then goes to convince "Persephone and ... the king of Ghostes" to return his wife to him (10.11-15). In his attempt to sway the diabolical powers, Orpheus puts his conventionally rhetorical case in music, but it is the song itself--what Milton will come to call "divine song, [in which] more is meant than meets the ear" (*Ad Patrem*, Milton, 83; *L'Allegro*, 1.120)[3]--not the musical accompaniment, that emits the persuasive power. Marilyn Williamson notes that "the significance of Orphic song for both the social order and religious worship has been a fundamental and continuing feature of the myth from the beginning..." (378), and again in Milton's words it is Orpheus' "song ... not his cithara" (*Ad Patrem*, 84) that is significant.

In keeping with rhetorical tradition Orpheus opens his appeal by paying his respects to the deities of the underworld and assuring them of the integrity of his mission to "the shady Hell" (10.18-23). "The cause of this vyage is my wyfe," he assures them, whose premature death he "would have borne ... paciently.../ But Love surmounted powre" (10.23-6). This personified "Love" (i.e. Cupid) "is knowen great force to have/ Above on earth" and Orpheus "beleeve[s] hee reignes heere too" (10.26-8). He then alludes to Pluto's rape of Persephone and to Cupid's reputed role in that act and its aftermath, and concludes that "Love coupled also yow" (10.28-9). The mythical musician then "beseeches" the king and queen of the underworld, by all the regions and the elements of Hell itself, to "unreele ... Eurydicee['s] ... destinye/ That was so swiftly reeled up" (10.30-3).

Moving from the particular to the general Orpheus calls attention to the fact that ultimately it is human destiny to reside in the realm of the shades and to fall under Pluto's and Persephone's dominion. Since we all "belong" to the gods of the underworld, they cannot lose someone simply by extending her stay on earth. Moreover, Orpheus continues, as we are dead for so much longer than we are alive they "doo over humaine kynde reigne longest tyme" (10.34-7). He concludes his argument by returning to the particular instance of his beloved Eurydice. He craves "her but for a whyle" after which short time she will again, inevitably, come under the dominion of the gods of the underworld. But if these same powers refuse his plea, they may choose to rejoice in two deaths rather than one because Orpheus refuses to leave unaccompanied by Eurydice (10.37-42). The framing of his plea as a conventionally rhetorical argument calls our attention to the fact that Orpheus' power to *move* those who listen to his song(s) lies not in the music of the song but in its words. This power to move and its location in language are exactly the elements of the myth that so attract Bacon and Milton to Orpheus.

"As he this tale did tell,/ And played on his instrument, the bloodless ghostes shed teares" (10.42-3). Even the vulture which neverendingly feasts on the ever-re-integrating heart of Titius is moved to stop eating; the perpetually thirsty Tantalus stops trying to drink, and; "Danaus daughters ceast to fill theyr tubbes that have no brink." In addition, "Ixions whele stood still: and downe sate Sisyphus uppon/ His rolling stone"[4] (10.42-8). Even the Furies, those diabolical counterparts to the Heavenly

Muses, the source of human creativity, begin to weep. "And neyther Pluto nor his Ladie were so strong/ And hard of stomacke to withold [Orpheus'] petition long" (10.49-51). They summon Eurydice, still limping because of the serpent's bite, from among the "newcome Ghostes" and turn her over to Orpheus on the "condicion that he should not backe uppon her looke,/ Untill the tyme that he were past the bounds of Limbo quyght:/ Or else to lose his gyft" (10.51-6).

Orpheus loses no time in setting out upon "a path that steepe upryght" will return him to the world of the living so that he and Eurydice can resume their earthly love affair (10.56-8). But, as Golding's Ovid tells us,

> they were within
> A kenning of the upper earth, when Orphye did begin
> To dowt him lest shee followed not, and through an eager love
> Desyrous for to see her he his eyes did backward move.
> Immediately shee slipped backe. (10.57-61).[5]

Although Orpheus immediately stretches out his arms to grasp the disappearing Eurydice she vanishes so quickly that "nothing save the slippery aire (unhappy man) he caught" (10.61-3). Eurydice does not blame Orpheus for her second death because she knows that it is the strength of his love for her that has caused him to violate the god's edict (10.64-6). But if Eurydice is able to forgive Orpheus, he is not himself so willing, nor perhaps so able, to accept what has transpired.

"This double dying of his wife set Orphye in a stound" akin to the one that resulted in "Plutos dreadfull Hound" losing its very nature and being "turned into stone," and also like "the foolish Olenus" and "his wretched wyfe Lethea" who both became stones and "doo stand even yit on watry Ide" (10.69-78). As we might expect, Orpheus "earnest sute did make" to return yet again to Hell, but whether to appeal once more for the release of Eurydice or to make good his suicidal threat of remaining there with her we can never know as "Charon would not suffer him to passe the Stygian lake" (10.79-80). We must take note here that we are not provided any details of Orpheus' song as it would have been offered to the supernatural boatman, Charon. When we have previously been denied a song, when Hymen was summoned, we have seen that the results are less than positive. Hymen would not sing at the wedding and the wedding ended in disaster; now, we are denied Orpheus' song and his bid to rejoin Eurydice ends in failure. This not only anticipates the outcome of Orpheus' adventure, in both the short and the long term, but once again it highlights the importance of the song itself.

Having been refused for seven days Orpheus sits upon the bank of the lake and fasts for that amount of time: "Care, teares, and thought, and sorrow were his meate..." (10.81-2). At the end of this time, "crying out uppon the Gods of Hell as cruell, hee/ Withdrew to lofty Rhodopee and Heme which beaten bee/ With Northen wynds." There he spent fully three years "utterly eschew[ing]/ The womankynd." We are told we cannot know whether Orpheus' sexual forbearance is due to a vow he has taken or is born of the failure of his trek to the underworld. We are also told that for all of Orpheus' disinterest, nonetheless there "many a one desyrous were to match/ With him" (10.83-90). Yet while he "did all alike dispatch" the women's advances, he is credited with teaching, during that time, the "Thracian folke" to make a brothel of males "and of the flowering pryme of boayes the pleasure for to take" (10.90-2).

Most of the remainder of Book 10 of Ovid's Metamorphoses is sung by Orpheus himself from atop "a hyll [. A]nd on the hyll a verie levell plot,/ Fayre greene with grasse" is where "this Poet borne of Goddes" (10.93-5) sits himself down and proceeds to perform the act that makes him the archetypal poet. Upon sitting down Orpheus commences a song, which this time we hear in full, and which calls to him in great numbers the trees of the earth and the beasts of the field. The trees provide shade and comfort as he sings of their generation. The animals deny their own particular natures as carnivores and herbivores in favour of the general community of the place, which general community is created only by Orpheus' song.

The creation of this place is surely an analog to his very singing and indeed to poetry itself because in order to create a place from which he can sing, that is, a place for himself in the world, Orpheus--by the power of his song--animates nature itself. And once animated, it is *moved* to virtuous action (in varying degrees from passive listening for the sake of instruction to active abstinence from instinctively destructive drives to eat fellow listeners). As Sir Philip Sidney tells us, "the ending end of all earthly learning being vertuous action, those skilles that most serve to bring forth that have a most just title to bee Princes over all the rest." And he goes on to tell us that it is the poet more than anyone else who deserves recognition as the practitioner of these "princely" skills, and whose practice "extendeth it selfe out of the limits of a mans own little world to the government of families, and maintayning of publique societies" (Smith, 161-2).

Returning to Golding's translation of Book 10, from line 97 to line 147 we read a litany of the trees that respond to Orpheus' summons as we also read of their several metamorphoses from earlier, previously animate, incarnations. For example, the "Pynapple with tufted top and harsh and prickling heare, [is] / The tree to Cybele, mother of the Goddes most deere. For why?/ Her minion Atys putting off the shape of man, did dye,/ And hardened into this same tree" (10.110-13). Here we see Orpheus as a poet most in tune with his audience. Not only does he make a place for himself in the world by physically reconfiguring it, but he does so by singing that song which is most likely to catch the ear of those upon whom he must depend for that reconfiguration. He will civilize a previously uncivilized nature by recalling to the uncivilized their previously civilized natures: as Bacon and Milton will recall to their readers the previously civilized state of being before the Fall, immediately after the Fall, and in the primitive church. Orpheus addresses his audience's natural curiosity about where they have come from in order to construct a present and from thence a future in which they will behave in a manner more in tune with that which he would have for them, and for himself.

The analogy between the genus "poet" and Orpheus is also strengthened here by the recognition that Orpheus is not engaging in creation (of *his* world) ex nihilo, but is instead creating by way of re-creation. His reanimation of formerly animate material is entirely in keeping with what it has meant to be an artistic or literary creator from the earliest writings in the Western tradition (Ovid's *Orpheus* being an obvious case in point) until comparatively recently. This certainly would have been a prevalent understanding of literary creativity in the English Renaissance. We need look no further than Chaucer and Shakespeare for confirmation of this fact. Neither can it be accidental that we are not offered an account of the metamorphosis of every single tree; while to do so would be to write an account of natural history that is quite out of step with the purpose(s) of myth (and quite in step with that kind of writing Sidney identifies as properly being the province of the historian [Smith, 162ff.]), it would also deny to the poet and to Orpheus an element which both obviously do possess: genuine creativity. In Sidney's words:

> There is no arte delivered to mankinde that hath not the workes of Nature for his principall object,

> without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend....
>
> ....
>
> Onely the poet, disdayning to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his owne invention, dooth grow in effect another nature, in *making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite a newe, formes such as never were in Nature,* as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with Nature, not inclosed within the narrow warrant of her guifts, but freely ranging onely within the Zodiack of his owne wit.
> (Smith, 156, 157. My emphasis.)

Orpheus' song does not account for all the trees by tales of metamorphosis because not all are re-animated. Some trees are animated by Orpheus for the first time just as some of the material of any truly creative author is his own completely original creation. Like the Renaissance authors who will follow his lead, Orpheus engages himself in original creation with familiar material some of which has been animated before (eg. the "palmetrees" 1.112, for Orpheus; myth, for later writers) and some of which must be viewed, regardless of its a priori physical ontology, as entirely Orpheus' "creation."

Once having created for himself a civilized place in the world, and having "tryed every string,/ And found that though they severally in sundry sounds did ring,/ Yit made they all one Harmonie" Orpheus is ready to appeal to his mother Calliope, the Muse of Epic Poetry, for inspiration to sing his "song of Jove, for every thing/ Is subject unto royall Jove" (10.150-4). Here we see further reason for Orpheus' power to attract not just trees, flowers, and beasts, but also poets: through diversity he achieves harmony. He is not tied to a single song, a single message, yet he is able to employ the variety of his stories to a single end--that end being both and simultaneously the civilization of the natural world and the praising of a higher order. This is a theme we will see picked up and played with gusto in Bacon's writing as we examine the way he uses the myth of Orpheus to contribute to the general expression of his belief that Nature provides the narrative by way of which we can come to know the irresistible form of God's governance in our pursuit of the perfect civil government.

As well as being entirely natural (Orpheus is a direct descendent of the gods, just as Christian humanity is taken to owe its existence to its God) it is entirely reasonable that Orpheus would praise this higher order because he attributes the power of his song to Jove: "Of Jove the heavenly King/ I oft have shewed the power" (10.154-5). Coming as it does so close on the heels of Orpheus' recent recreation of the world we cannot miss the allusion to the form in which this "shew" is made manifest. We are invited to conclude that it is only due to the channelling of Jove's power through him that Orpheus is able to achieve the changes he effects in his environment. It need hardly be said that this is a major theme in Milton's work as well as Bacon's.

The remainder of Book 10 sees Orpheus telling, in more extended fashion, of the metamorphosis of certain gods and their descendants into the trees that now constitute his audience. From each discreet tale there is an obvious moral conclusion to be drawn, and for most of them the primary theme is one of misplaced love. This part of Book 10 seems to have attracted no great interest from mythographers or poets in later years, perhaps because explicit moralizing interferes with the kind of allegorizing and mythography engaged in by the most famous Renaissance mythographers, Vincenzo Cartari, (*Imagini*, 1556), Natale Conti (*Mythologiae*, 1568), and Bacon himself. The next part of Ovid's myth of Orpheus to call attention to itself is his death which does not occur until Book 11.

In the transition from Book 10 to Book 11 we lose Orpheus in more ways than one. We encounter Orpheus' death, but we do so, as might well be expected, through the voice of another. Book 11 begins with what first strikes the reader as something of a narratorial interruption. No longer is Orpheus singing his songs of metamorphosis. Instead, we witness a return of the voice of the Metamorphoses' poet, which we may choose to call Golding as easily as Ovid. Call him what we will, this narrator's return jars us because we have become so immersed in Orpheus' poems--of Ganymede (10.160-67), of Apollo and Hyacinthus (10.168-233), of Venus' angry transformation of people into bulls (10.234-60), of Pygmalion (10.261-326), Cinyras and Myrrha (10.327-595), and finally of the life and fate of Adonis (10.596-863), into which the story of Atalanta is incorporated (10.648-830)--that we forget that Orpheus is not the primary narrator in the Metamorphoses.

But however abruptly we are taken aback by this "new" voice, it reminds us of the power of Orpheus' song--"Now while the Thracian *Poet* with his *song* delyghts the mynds/ Of savage beastes, and drawes both stones and trees against their kynds" (11.1-2; my emphasis)--by calling to our attention the fact that we, as much as the woods and stones, birds and beasts, have been drawn into the world created by his song. We have seen Orpheus' power at first hand when we realize that we have been drawn into the world he has created with his language out of the world in which he exists as a physical entity. The re-establishment of the voice of the narrator also calls to our attention Golding's attitude toward Orpheus. This is an attitude we will encounter again in Milton's writing: notice that Orpheus is the "Thracian *Poet*" who delights "with his *song*." The emphasis here is not on Orpheus as a musician, nor still less is it on his lyre; rather, the emphasis is on Orpheus as a singer of songs, songs which the title "Poet" strongly suggests are powerful, important, meaningful songs "the final end [of which] is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate soules, made worse by theyr clayey lodgings, can be capable of" (Smith, 160).

No sooner do we come to understand we have experienced Orpheus' power than we are presented with the instruments of his demise. And in reading of the end of Orpheus we also read of the end of his newly created space, his newly civilized world. It is the "wyves of Ciconie" (11.3) who visit such a cacophony upon Orpheus and his newly ordered nature that his own euphonious song is drowned out and only thereby overthrown. These riotous women are incensed at Orpheus over his disdaining of their advances (10.87-9) and so they attack with full force "Orphyes singing mouth" (11.4-9) thus reinforcing yet again our understanding of the fact that it is Orpheus' eloquence rather than his musical prowess that empowers him to recreate the world. One of these Thracian Bacchanals throws a lance "armd round about with leaves" while another throws "a stone at him, which vanquisht with his sweete/ And most melodius harmonye, fell humbly at his feete/ As sorye for the furious act it purposed" (11.9-14). But if these initial attacks fail to put an end to Orpheus' civilizing song, the spurned Thracian women will ultimately prevail and we will see that Yeats' warning holds even for so powerful a poet as Orpheus: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold..." (*The Second Coming*).

The "centre" is Orpheus but it is also more than Orpheus. It is also "the sweetnesse of his song" which for awhile "appease[s] all weapons" until it is drowned out by "the noyse now growing strong/ With blowing shalmes,** and beating drummes, and bedlem howling out,/ And clapping

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**shalmes: shawms, oboe-like instruments.

hands on every syde by Bacchus drunken rout" (11.15-18). The "sweetnesse" of Orpheus' song lies as much in its effect as in its sound. It is a song of civilization; of what ought to be and even more of what can be. As Northrop Frye has noted:

> In a distant past, even before Homer, a period associated with such legendary names as Musaeus, Linus, and Orpheus, along with Zoroaster in religion and Hermes Trismegistus in philosophy, the poet, we are told, was the lawgiver of society, the founder of civilization (*Mythos and Logos*, 7).

It is also, therefore, a poem of prophecy. And if his poem is a poem of prophecy then the poet is a prophet. So Golding translates Ovid as calling Orpheus: "The first of all stones were/ Made ruddy with the prophets blood, and could not give him eare" (11.19-20).[6] Including the foregoing, Orpheus is called "prophet" four times in the ninety-five lines of Book 11 which relate the account of his death. (It is not likely to be a coincidence that Milton focuses on the death of Orpheus, when the mythic archetype is most clearly depicted as prophetic, in *Lycidas*, a poem that functions on the personal and the political level as a prophecy.) As if to make clear to us the function of the poet as prophet, we also see within these lines the reaction of "labring men with brawned armes" (11.34) to the riot of the destructive Bacchanals. "They [the "labring men"] seeing this same rout, no longer stood,/ But ran *away* and left their tools behynd them" (11.36-7; my emphasis).

This scattering of the more ordinary Thracian men serves a dual purpose within the myth. On a structural level, it provides to the rioters the instruments of Orpheus' death--the "tools" left scattered about the fields adjacent to the uproar (11.37-41). On a more thematic level, it provides us with something rather akin to the more modern, novelistic, literary device known as the character foil. We see Orpheus as a symbolic representation of a civilization's centre. But the labourers are to be found at its periphery, and the Bacchanals function, quite similarly to one level of Eve's function in Christian mythology, as enemies from within.[7] While the civilization depends for its very existence on the poet-prophet Orpheus, the labourers' is a parasitic relationship to civilization, one in which the role of dependent is clearly theirs. And the Bacchanals represent all but inevitable "perturbations and seditions and wars" which mark the "periods and closes [of] kingdoms and commonwealths" (Bacon, *Orpheus; or Philosophy*, Works 13:113). Orpheus, in his role as symbolic centre and poet-prophet, reconfigures nature and creates an original space for himself in a world made better for his audience and himself by virtue of the facts that they *can be* his audience. Furthermore, he can turn songs of where they have been into prophecies of where they are going so effectively and so powerfully that the singer becomes virtually indistinguishable from his songs. But by contrast, at the first sign of trouble the workmen drop their tools and run away leaving them behind so that the Bacchanals may effect their deadly design and bring the poet's civilization to an end. The contrast between Orpheus and the labourers is significant because the contrast between one who can disentangle himself from his social identity simply by letting go his tools and removing himself from the field, on the one hand, and a poet who is indistinguishable from his poems and their immanent power, on the other, calls our attention to the sacredness of the role of the poet, its centrality to its society, and the inevitability of the transformation of the role of concerned poet into that of some form of prophet. The presence of the Bacchanals is important according to this interpretation because they serve as a reminder of the fact that the poet/prophet will always be faced by those who would challenge and ultimately overthrow him and the society he represents.

Because it is in Book 11, in the account of the death of Orpheus, that we see most clearly the path of transition from musician to singer to poet to prophet, it will come as no surprise later to find that it is this aspect of the myth of Orpheus that most fires the imagination of John Milton insofar as his own adoption of this myth is concerned. Neither should we be surprised to see the death of Orpheus prominently interpreted in the account of the myth provided by Francis Bacon. But where Bacon's concern in regard to the interpretation of the myth of Orpheus is more broadly social in its application, Milton's focuses quite specifically on the interpretation of the social concern of the poet as a transformative force which renders him a prophet. Nor is the conception of the concerned literary artist as prophet unique, nor even new, to Milton. One of Bacon's peers, Sir Philip Sidney, had already articulated very nearly exactly that same sentiment in his Apology for Poetry, published in 1595, forty-three years before the first publication of *Lycidas*.

The nature of poetry and of the poet is an important element in most Elizabethan critical writing, and in Sidney we see much that is typical of the contemporary views of these closely related natures. Frye notes that "in most Elizabethan criticism we find some reference to the poet as having been dispossessed from a greater heritage. Sidney stresses this theme less than many of his contemporaries, but still it is there..." (*Mythos and Logos*, 7). And by calling Sidney's Apology "the critical manifesto for poets and critics in the Elizabethan age..." and "the *De Poetica* of our language" A.C. Hamilton forces us to recognize, even if we decline to accept his elevation of Sidney's work over all other possible entries, the importance of Sidney's work for Renaissance writers, and so for our own understanding of those writers (Hamilton, 51; 59).

According to Sidney, poets can be sorted into "three severall kindes": divine poets, philosophical poets, and "indeed right Poets" (Smith, 1.158-9). Of the first kind, he lists "*David* in his Psalmes, *Solomon* in his song of Songs... *Orpheus*, *Amphion*, and *Homer* in his hymnes" (Smith, 1.158-9; quoted also in Hamilton, 52). Of the second kind of poet Sidney lists several other classical examples, further subdividing these philosophical poets into writers on matters "eyther morall ... naturall ... Astronomicall ... or historical" (Smith, 1.159). Before progressing to an examination of Sidney's conception of the "right poet" and what it can tell us about the work of Bacon and Milton, it will be worth pausing briefly to clarify the implications of his first two kinds of poet and poetry.

Hamilton tells us that, for Sidney, "the first kind of poet [of which Orpheus is one] is divinely inspired" (52) and that he is of a lesser order than is the "right poet" because, being divinely inspired, he may often write poetry which serves to support non-Christian gods. We can see that this is a type of "divine" inspiration other than that with which we would ordinarily consider ourselves familiar. Such poets as these first sort are, as justifiably for Sidney as for Plato, to be banned from the ideal republic because their inspiration comes in the form of support for the gods the people do worship, without regard as to whether or not these are the gods (or clearly, for Sidney, the God) that *ought* to be worshipped. All three of Sidney's kinds of poet are poets by virtue of the fact that their writing, whatever else it may be, is writing of a sort that "moves" people to virtuous action. This impetus toward virtuous action is Sidney's ultimate demand of poetry and it is, as we have seen, the "ending end of all earthly learning" (161). It is because it is poetry's sine qua non that poetry alone deserves the title of "Princes over all the rest" (i.e. over all other forms of learning). It bears remarking that

Sidney joins Orpheus himself in citing the source of Orpheus' power, his inspiration, as divine. Orpheus satisfies Sidney's criteria for his first kind of poet because Orpheus calls for inspiration from his mother, the muse Calliope, in order that he may "frame [his] song of Jove, for everything/ Is subject unto royall Jove" (10.153-4). Orpheus' purpose seems to be the glorification of a pagan deity. His inspiration is divine inasmuch as it comes from outside himself and from outside of empirical nature (the realm of the "philosophical poet") in the form of the poet's age old source of inspiration, a muse. But however much his purpose is the glorification of a pagan, and therefore an incorrect, god, Orpheus' song is still the song of a poet because his *end* is to move people to virtuous action--the glorification of (a) G/god. It will be seen to be part of the genius of the "poetry" of Bacon and of Milton to go beyond Sidney's reading of Orpheus as merely a divine poet to one where Orpheus is recognized as being, regardless of his inspiration and his seeming purpose, a "right poet" even according to Sidney's own criteria.

Poetry of Sidney's second kind is writing that barely qualifies as "poetry." Of those writers who would argue by logical precept for the rightness of their observations and beliefs in regard to the moral, natural, astronomical, or historical realms of experience, Sidney says "whether they be poets or no let the Gramarians dispute" (Smith, 159). In other words, Sidney's argument here assumes a more or less formalistic definition of poetry. This is no more an uncommon definition in the Renaissance than it has become since. But it is unusual within the pages of Sidney's Apology, for elsewhere he says that "verse [i.e. the form of the "poem," is] but an ornament and no cause to Poetry, sith there have beene many most excellent Poets that never versified, and now swarme many versifiers that neede never answere to the name of Poets" (Smith, 160). This latter sentiment is the one that dominates the Apology; that poetry is not poetry merely by virtue of the form in which its ideas are presented.

Rather, writing qualifies as poetry when it has for its end the impetus toward virtuous action. "Poetry" of the kind that only "grammarians" would label as such is not poetry according to Sidney's standard because it contains no inherent impetus of this kind. Instead, it is mere description: of society, of the world, of the stars, of history. Being merely description, its inspiration can be located in the natural world, and so in no divine source, and neither within the poet himself. And this last quality, the location of inspiration within the poet, is the necessary final component in Sidney's definition of the "right Poet." It will now be a simple matter to relate Sidney's definitions of "poetry" and the "right poet," and it might be worth repeating that these definitions are of some importance to a full appreciation of the work of Francis Bacon and John Milton because Bacon and Milton proceed beyond the point at which Sidney leaves off in consideration of Orpheus. The prestige Sidney commanded as a critic and an articulator of prominently held opinions about what it was to be a poet or to read poetry in the English Renaissance make moving beyond him as Bacon and Milton do an act of very impressive reading indeed.

According to Sidney the "right Poet" is one whose writing satisfies his definition of "poetry," and who writes according to the light of genuine inspiration that emanates from within his own being. This genuine inspiration is 'inspiration' according to "the Christian sense of 'breathing into' by which he is 'lifted up with the vigor of his owne invention'" (Hamilton, 53), that I choose to call 'genuine' because it has already, during consideration of the first kind of poet, been distinguished by process of elimination from the incorrect inspiration that could lead a poet to speak in favour of pagan deities. Inspiration must breathe into a work not just such qualities as will cause it to inspire others to act, but such qualities as will cause others to act virtuously according to specifically Christian virtues. This is the loophole through which the greatest classical authors were granted admittance to the determinedly Christian canon of acceptable, virtuous, works.

The origin of this inspiration in the third kind of poet, the "right poet," is internal. Unlike Orpheus as Sidney conceives him, who gets his inspiration ultimately from his god, the right poet will get his inspiration from within himself, and will use this inspiration to write poetry that, by moving others to virtuous action, bears the fruit which proves it is genuine inspiration. The right poet then is one who is properly inspired, whose creations take the form of original imitation, and whose writing is "poetry" by virtue of the fact that it moves people to virtuous action. By this definition Bacon as well as Milton qualifies as a "right poet" because, like Milton, Bacon is properly inspired from within and without according to Christian virtues and his writing is aimed at moving his audience to act virtuously, in accordance with Christian principles. Bacon desired "a restitution and reinvesting ... of man to the sovereignty and power ... which he had in his first state of creation" (*Valerius Terminus*, Works 6:34 [Spedding dates the *V.T.* "some time before 1605" in his editor's preface to the *Novum Organum*, Works 1:147]), which state was one decidedly nearer to God.

By considering Sidney's definition of the "right poet" we can see where his reading of Orpheus falls short of the readings of Orpheus we will encounter in Bacon and Milton. Sidney's is a more literal reading of Orpheus than are those of Bacon and Milton. In assigning Orpheus to his comparatively devalued category of "divine" poet Sidney reads Orpheus merely as a spokesman for Jove, and not at all as a spokesman for God and the Christian impulse to civilize. He also fails to take into account Orpheus' power to move his audience to virtuous action, just as he glosses over the originality of Orpheus' imitation. As to his inspiration, if we were to read the dedication of the poet's poetry to his god as narrowly as Sidney seems to do in disqualifying Orpheus from consideration as a "right poet," then we would be left with a very Spartan list of poets indeed. Knowing as we do how large Sidney's Apology loomed over the critical landscape of his day, the reading of Orpheus it communicates serves to show us how astute and powerful is the adaptation of the myth, and the decision made to identify with Orpheus himself, by Francis Bacon and John Milton.[8]

Chapter 2
Empiricism and Mythology

In her analysis of Bacon's familiarity with Natalis Comes (Natali Conti) and Renaissance mythological tradition, Barbara Carman Garner notes that "the title 'Father of the Scientific Method' is limited to one small corner of Baconian thought, 'Induction'" (271). Although "induction," or "the scientific method," or "empiricism" may be "one small corner of Baconian thought," it is better to be thought of as the load-bearing cornerstone of a towering structure than as the dusty corner of a forgotten attic. What most concerned Bacon was not merely a desire to reach the "Truth," but in fact the very act of searching itself; for it is in the search that the process of thought Bacon wanted to instill in people is to be discovered. And to help him demonstrate the thinking process he advocated Bacon reached back to the familiar tales of classical mythology. He identified himself with one in particular, "Orpheus: or Philosophy," which appealed to him as much because of Orpheus' centrality to his society as because of its mythographical interpretation as a warning against allowing passion to triumph over reason. Bacon felt that "the appeal to mythic thought contain[ed] the key for developing a theory of discovery or a logic of problem solving" (Daniel, 219). This theory of discovery would enable all to see that the Crown of England followed the irresistible laws of God Himself in its governance of this world. It is fair to say, then, that the edifice Bacon would have had his great cornerstone support was the Monarchical system of government. This would be fair to say because before all else, Bacon was a political animal.

Frequently called the father of modern science, the "Father of the Scientific Method" (Garner, 271) or "the father of the industrial revolution" (Sewell, 125), Francis

Bacon, Baron of Verulam, Viscount St. Albans, and Lord High Chancellor of England,[9] might more appropriately be called a father of modern politics. Virtually everything Bacon did was primarily concerned with politics. This is as true of his writing, his philosophy, and as a corollary his use of mythology as it is of his lifelong attempt to gain the royal ear. "As early as 1580 ... the young Francis revealed his hope to emulate his recently deceased father and dedicate his life to her majesty's service" (Levy, 148-9). The following passage from a letter tc Burghley, dated 1592, articulates this hope.

> I ever bare a mind ... to serve her Majesty; not as a man born under Sol, that loveth honour; nor under Jupiter, that loveth business (for the contemplative planet carrieth me away wholly); but as a man born under an excellent Sovereign, that deserveth the dedication of all men's abilities. (Letters & Life, 1:108.)

So if it is true that the Royal Society of London claimed Bacon for the ancestor of its natural philosophy, what we now more narrowly call "science," it is no less true that Bacon's own scientific impulses were fired primarily and consistently by the political imperative of helping the Crown to discover the most effective style of governance. For Bacon, as for so many others from Machiavelli to Richard Nixon's CREEP[***], certain specific knowledge translated into power. "Human knowledge and human power meet in one..." (*Novum Organum*, [1620] 1.3). Hence it would follow that the possessor of the ultimate knowledge would be the wielder of the ultimate power. What remains to be determined then is, first, the nature of the ultimate knowledge, and second, Bacon's ideas about how to translate the former into a stable, enduring power. Obviously, his interest in the security and maintenance of power was on behalf of the Crown of England,[10] the security of which he saw as facing two kinds of peril: that from without, in the form of the Irish and the Spanish, and that from within:

[***] Committee to RE-Elect the President

> Nor when reasons had to be given year after year for departing from those time-honoured precedents and inevitable exigencies of state to be pleaded in answer to all dissentients, could all the art of her ministers or all her fearless self-reliance disguise from the Commons the fact, that by refusing to vote the supplies they could place the government in a serious difficulty. This fact once recognized made the Commons potentially an overmatch for the Crown. (James Spedding's Preface to Bacon's "Of the True Greatness of Britain." [Spedding dates this fragment sometime during the period 1606-08] Works 13:224.)

Bacon, ever the intelligent politician, was alive to the merest possibility of a threat to the Crown, and so wanted to help establish a style of governing that even "all dissentients" would find irresistible.

Bacon's career has been miscast according to the overemphasis on that "small corner" of his thought, Induction, largely because his interests, always political, so frequently manifested themselves in his attention to the natural world. Empiricism, our dependence on interpreting sensory input from a concrete, natural, world independent of our (mis)understanding, has traditionally been hailed as Bacon's greatest contribution to modern science. This is no doubt due to his elevation of the study of nature, i.e. the natural world (perhaps we would now call it the physical universe), to the ostensible place of highest importance in his new method, his *Novum Organum*, (literally 'new instrument') for gaining knowledge.

> ...they have chosen a way to [the end and goal of the sciences] which is altogether erroneous and impassable. And an astonishing thing it is to one who rightly considers the matter, that no mortal

> should have seriously applied himself to the opening and laying out of a road for the human understanding direct from the sense, by a course of experiment orderly conducted and well built up.... (*Novum Organum*, 1620, 1.82.)

Of course we must not overlook the implications of the emphasis Bacon places on the "sense"; if we are to trust to our senses for information about the world there is entailed in that trust not only an implication of faith that the natural world is "directly" accessible to "human understanding," but also a further implication that the natural world is of primary experiential importance, that it somehow ranks first, prior to any other source of knowledge. That this should be so for Bacon becomes completely reasonable when we consider the alternative he viewed as being most likely to the empiricism he proposed.

> ...the most ordinary method ... is no more than this. When a man addresses himself to discover something, he first seeks out and sets before him all that has been said about it by others; then he begins to meditate for himself; and so by much agitation and working of the wit solicits and as it were evokes his own spirit to give him oracles: which method has no foundation at all, but rests only upon opinions and is carried about with them. (*N.O.*, 1.82.)

Again we see, by implication, the importance of the natural world to Bacon's proposed method of investigation. Meditation about what others have to say about some yet further removed object can in no way be conceived of as an accurate way of coming to know about that object to a consciousness immersed in the ideology of post-Baconian twentieth century empiricism, but clearly Bacon felt it had been the usual way of "coming to know" prior to and even during his own time. Furthermore, there is a premise implied by the second line of the immediately foregoing quotation that we are likely to miss, again because we in the twentieth century are so immersed in the ideology of empiricism that we would tend neither to notice nor to question it; "when a man addresses himself to discover something" *about the natural world* he ought to follow Bacon's method and abandon the meditative approach. Bacon's "new instrument" is extremely concerned with searching for truth via the natural world.

Yet for all the importance that Bacon places on the natural world, it still only ostensibly occupies the place of highest importance in his new method. The more important lesson to be drawn from Bacon's *Novum Organum* is, of course, the method itself. It has become far more common to think of Bacon as someone concerned with the truth rather than as someone concerned with how we get to the truth. Bacon is indeed interested in discovering the truth, but as we can clearly see from the preceding examples, his concern, before even being with what the nature of the universe truly is, lies with how we can "open and lay... out a road" to rightly "discover" nature to the "human understanding." This is the nature of the ultimate knowledge he desires for the security and maintenance of the power of the British Crown.

> Bacon...insists on the possibility of developing a method of discovery more accessible than that permitted by an uninformative appeal simply to the acuteness and strength of what he calls individuals' wits (*ingenia*) [*N.O.*, 8:34, *N.O.*, 1.61]. His own theory, he notes, provides a method which can guide all intellects and wits in a procedure of inquiry in which discovery in the arts and sciences is raised to the level of a methodic art rather than left to a matter of chance ([*N.O.* 1:122; *De Augmentis*, 9:64-69]. Daniel, 220.)

Bacon's first interest was not in obtaining a collection of facts about the world. He was much more concerned with establishing an open road, a reliable way, by which he or any other natural philosopher could discover the world as it really is, as created by God, rather than as humanity had come by various wrongheaded ways of thinking[11] mistakenly and blindly to imagine it to be. Of his new philosophy he said:

> For I am building in the human understanding a true model of the world, such as it is in fact, not such as a man's own reason would have it to be; a thing which cannot be done without a very diligent dissection and anatomy of the world. But I say that those foolish and apish images of worlds which the fancies of men have created in philosophical systems, must be utterly scattered to the winds. Be it known then how vast a difference there is (as I said above) [this in reference to the doctrine of Idols, discussed in *N.O.*, 1.40ff. See endnote # 11] between the Idols of the human mind and the Ideas of the divine. The former are nothing more than arbitrary abstractions; the latter are the Creator's own stamp upon creation.... (*N.O.*, 1.124.)

We see here that with his new method Bacon wants to prevent arbitrariness in human understanding as much as he wants to attack misunderstanding per se. Once our "foolish and apish images of worlds" have been "utterly scattered to the winds" Bacon would have his new method produce in us a true understanding of the world "as it is in fact, not ... as [we] would have it to be." Once people attain this true understanding, they will see in the Crown's government an exact replica of the irresistible laws of God's natural order and so will be persuaded to follow the Crown's order (and, therefore, orders) with no less resistance than would be directed toward the laws of nature.[12]

While there is initially some room for ambiguity in our understanding of what Bacon means by a "model of the world," this ambiguity must very soon dissolve under close inspection of the balance of the passage. An initial reading might misinterpret "model" as a reference to a particular knowledge, a product, rather than to a way of coming to know, i.e. a process of discovery. But a model of the world, according to such an interpretation, would be an image of the world, and as we see, Bacon insists on scattering to the winds those foolish and apish images created in philosophical systems by the fancies of men. It is not the image that forms the model for Bacon, instead the model is a method. It is a model of how we can come to know the world as it truly is as opposed to how we would have it be. It is a way by which we can overcome the various Idols of the Tribe, Cave, Market-place, and Theatre. It is not a new Idol nor set of Idols, as it surely would be if what this model aimed at were the supplanting of existing images of reality with merely another single, particular account of the world. Bacon intends to knock the Idols down and cast them away; he does not propose to replace them. To propose a new image of reality would merely be to propose yet another in what threatens to be an endless cycle of arbitrary abstractions.

> Bacon's idea of history is complex and includes both cyclical and progressive views.
>
> ....
>
> Bacon was convinced that progress was something that human beings could make possible, that it could be brought about through human effort, and that through human effort the future *could* be characterized by gradual, continuous progress" (Guibbory, 44).

Bacon steps out of the cycle of history by proposing a method, "a very diligent dissection and anatomy of the world," by way of which we can ensure that what we understand to be reality is in fact the reality God has created: the natural world. That we will come to understand reality is certainly the product of Bacon's science, but we must not mistake its product for the science itself.

Baconian science is a method, a way of coming to know, a process of discovery by way of which reality can be unambiguously, i.e. non-"arbitrarily," "dis-covered" to us. As such it is, indeed it must be, "a true model of the world": not because it produces a particular, comprehensible, "right" image of reality but because it partakes of reality in its own operations. Bacon's true model of the world is one that mimics the world itself inasmuch as it imitates for, and insinuates into the scientist/philosopher/reader/person, the irresistible operations of the natural world. As John Briggs, most recently, has pointed out, Bacon goes so far as to present his arguments in writing that Briggs calls "the rhetoric of nature."[13]

This emphasis on method over matter is extremely important. Bacon is concerned with the discovery of truth, and truth, by its very nature, is not in the seventeenth century an arbitrary thing.[14] Therefore any method proposed to get at it must be one the persuasive force of which is irresistible. We must recall at this point Bacon's first concern, the political imperative of helping the Crown to discover the most effective style of governance. It is for this reason that Bacon is so concerned with discovering (literally dis-cover, remove the cover, uncover: OED) the truth of the world as God has created it. He wants to remove the cover that fallacious philosophies have placed over our perception and our understanding of the working of God's natural laws because a true understanding of those irresistible laws would provide a model for an irresistible form of government.

For Bacon, the nature of this persuasive force is exactly the point in question. The nature of the ultimate knowledge he desires for the security and maintenance of the power of the British Crown is concomitant with the method of his process of discovery. To say that he has found fault with extant methods of inquiry and with the kinds of persuasion then most prevalent in the areas of natural, moral, and civil philosophy, would be to understate the case.

> I am preparing a refutation of philosophies but know not how to begin. The road which lies open for others is closed to me. The hosts of errors are so many and so great that it is impossible to engage them singly. They must be overthrown and swept away in masses. .... I reject the forms and deny the validity of their proofs and demonstrations. (*Redargutio Philosophiarum*. (1609) Trans. in Farrington, 103.)

Bacon's turn to myth arises out of the fault he finds with other philosophies, and such methods of inquiry and persuasion which accompany them. He "suggests that the appeal to mythic thought contains the key for developing a theory of discovery or a logic of problem solving" (Daniel, 219).

> The very language of the myths ... suggests that they be treated as models or guides within a method of discovery, not only because their explicit linguistic ties to the realities they signify alert us to the linguistic procedures which guide the process of discovery in coming to understand nature, but also because myths both appeal widely and are not limited by dictates of rational science or logic in their explanatory abilities. (Daniel, 225.)

Repeatedly in his work Bacon displays a general distaste for the rational science or logic of Plato or Aristotle, but in the *Novum Organum* he articulates his specific complaint with logic and registers his dissatisfaction with extant methods of discovery.

> As the sciences which we now have do not help us in finding out new works, so neither does the logic which we now have help us in finding out new sciences.
>
> ....
>
> The logic now in use serves rather to fix and give stability to the errors which have their foundation in commonly received notions than to help the search after truth. So it does more harm than good. (*N.O.*, 1.11 and 12.)

Unlike twentieth century philosophers who hold that logic is an enduring universal, and therefore uncontingent, truth, Bacon conceives of logic as a system of thought subservient to philosophy and the search for truth. It is because Bacon holds this now unfamiliar conception that Daniel is able to describe accurately Bacon's desire to systematize inquiry as a "logic of problem solving." And indeed, it is this system rather than the problems it addresses that Bacon strives to develop and communicate, and that leads him to what "the letters of dedication and the preface ... indicate Bacon considered ... an important and, above all, a philosophical work," namely, the Wisdom of the Ancients (Paterson, 428).

* * *

Neither in nature nor in myths does Bacon see a record of God's will; rather, he sees a recording of God's ways. "[F]or it is written, *Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei*; but it is not written, *Coeli enarrant voluntatem Dei*": from Psalms 19:1 'The heavens declare the glory of God,' not 'the heavens declare the will of God' (The Advancement of Learning in Johnson, 201). Barbara Carman Garner notes that Benjamin Farrington expresses some confusion at the fact that "Bacon saw his programme as both a return and a restoration, and an advance or progress..." which confusion she herself explains away quite nicely when she recognizes that "an understanding of Bacon's belief that myth was the vehicle of philosophy ... explains this apparent contradiction" (Garner, 276). The "return or restoration" of which Garner speaks is to "the most ancient times ... buried in oblivion and silence" between which time, "the hidden depths of antiquity," and that era redolent with false philosophical systems from which he is attempting to rescue his own time, "the days of tradition and evidence that followed, there is drawn a veil, as it were, of fables, which come in and occupy the middle region that separates what has perished from what has survived" (Preface, *Wisdom*, Works 13:75). As Garner puts it: "the advance for which Bacon hopes is one over the schools especially of Plato and Aristotle, and his return is to be, as far as it is humanly possible, to that far-off happy age when man was in complete control of nature" (277).

Bacon's hope for advancement is fairly obvious. The very titles of his works demand that we take note of this hope: *Novum Organum*; *Redargutio Philosophiarum*; *De Augmentis Scientiarum*; *The New Atlantis*: New Instrument, Refutation of Philosophy, *The Advancement of Learning.* Farrington finds "it ... desirable to stress the ethical, optimistic, reforming zeal and determination of Francis Bacon because it is so generally neglected. Yet it expresses itself at every stage of his career," and he also calls our attention to the fact that Bacon "confided to his private chaplain, secretary and friend, Dr. Rawley, his early disgust with Aristotle" (30). In a similar vein Garner makes explicit for us the reasoning behind Bacon's opinion of the historical Greek philosophers:

> We know his aversion for the abstractions of the schools of Aristotle and Plato, whose methods were suitable for the schoolmaster, but not for searchers after truth: "...Plato made over the world to thoughts; and Aristotle made over thoughts to words; men's studies even then tending to dispute and discourse, and forsaking the stricter inquiry of truth. Hence such opinions are rather to be condemned in the whole, than confuted separately in the parts; for they are opinions of those who wish to talk much and know little. And this abstract matter is the matter of disputation, not of the universe." (*De Principiis atque Originibus*, Works 5:467. [Brit. ed.] in Garner, 278.)

We cannot but hear an echo of the doctrine of Idols in this passage. By making over the world to thoughts Plato is guilty of, if not introducing, at least becoming the too eloquent articulator of the Idols of the Tribe: "for it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of things" (*N.O.*, 1.41). Aristotle is no less culpable in making over thoughts to words for by so doing he strengthens the hold of the Idols of the Market-place on the human mind, "for it is by discourse that men associate" (*N.O.*, 1.43). Consequently we can understand Bacon's desire to progress beyond the schools of Plato and Aristotle, and we can see where the "reforming zeal and determination" of which Farrington speaks is being directed. But if Bacon's passion for the advancement of learning is obvious, what is less obvious is the role he would have "a return and a restoration" play in his active attempt to reform philosophy, and what would be returned to and restored.

Once again we must acknowledge the importance of Bacon's prioritizing of natural philosophy over all other kinds of knowledge, and in so doing we must briefly consider his attitude toward Christianity. Although it has become critically fashionable to sneer at Bacon's Christianity and to refer to it as "Bacon's putative Christianity," (Briggs, ix) or to advance the suggestion that Bacon would everywhere draw an all-encompassing "connection between Christianity and fanatical cruelty," (Paterson, 438)[15] this position is misleading and almost certainly wholly false.

The Fall of man according to Biblical scripture is an undeniably important trope in Baconian philosophy, with important ramifications for his mythography. Bacon desired "a restitution and reinvesting (in great part) of man to the sovereignty and power (for whensoever he shall be able to call the creatures by their true names he shall again command them) which he had in his first state of creation" (*Valerius Terminus*, Works 6:34). Humanity's "first state of creation" was unquestionably, for Bacon, the time before the Fall described in the book of Genesis, and it is a time the "notions and conceits of [which, namely,] virtue and vice, justice and wrong, good and evil..." are "imprinted upon the spirit of man by an inward instinct, according to the law of conscience, which is a sparkle of the purity of his first estate" (*Advancement*, Works 6:395).

Yet if we are connected, via 'the law of our consciences,' to humanity's first estate, this connection is by no means sufficient for Bacon. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the OED traces the etymology of "state" through "estate," and that the two words are used virtually interchangeably in Elizabethan England. As anyone familiar with his *Essays* knows, Bacon chooses his words as carefully as does a poet. The implication, therefore, of humanity in its fallen *state* being connected via a *law* of conscience to its first *estate* is that the moral law which obtained during the time of Adam's complete and intimate knowledge of nature (the "notions and conceits of virtue and vice, justice and wrong, good and evil") must still obtain in humanity's present state. The consequence of this implication is that Bacon need not expend any effort in making a case for Christian virtue. For him human fealty to divine law is obvious, necessary, and beyond question. Thus, his elevation of natural philosophy, over moral or civil philosophy, to the pre-eminent position in human inquiries is obvious, necessary, and beyond question.

While it would be wrong to say that Bacon pined for an impossible return to the Garden of Eden, he did believe that Adam was the last man to have direct access to the ultimate knowledge of the way God works in and through nature. And although he demonstrates an awareness that this Christian myth (as we might choose to call it, although Bacon never would) can be interpreted as an allegory advising against the inquiry into the natural world, he quite specifically speaks against the adoption of this point of view.

> For it was not that pure and uncorrupted natural knowledge whereby Adam gave names to the creatures according to their propriety, which gave occasion

> to the fall. It was the ambitious and proud desire of moral knowledge to judge of good and evil, to the end that man may revolt from God and give laws to himself, which was the form and manner of temptation. ("Preface," *Great Instauration*, Works 8:35-6.)

In other words, Bacon is saying that Adam's sin was not the possession and application of an intimate knowledge of nature, his sin lay in eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Bacon here distinguishes between "natural knowledge" and "moral knowledge" and if he considers the latter to follow from the former, he also believes the former to be, in the pre-lapsarian state at least, "pure and uncorrupted." This, then, commences the explanation of the part to be played by "a return and a restoration" in his active attempt to reform philosophy. It is to a point as near as possible to this pure and uncorrupted knowledge of nature as fallen humanity can reach that Bacon hopes to return philosophy as he guides it, and us by way of it, forward.

The Fall is important to Bacon also "because it marks the beginning of the long history of false knowledge.

> Adam turned away from both nature and God when he aspired to "the proud knowledge" of good and evil, intending to provide his own laws rather than depending on God's (*Advancement of Learning*, in Works 6:92). Once the human mind was focused inward upon itself, it became a "false mirror," filled with idols distorting our knowledge of nature as well as our relationship to God. (Guibbory, 46.)

Obviously, the culminating falsity of this "long history of false knowledge" is described by the doctrine of Idols which, as we can now see, follows directly from Bacon's account and use of the Fall. And as we have already seen, among those most culpable in the propagation of the idols are the most prominent of philosophers, specifically Plato and Aristotle (p.39, above) of the Classical era. But if "mankind after the Fall was utterly depraved, ... he still had God's promise and through the sweat of his brow he could attain this knowledge of nature." And happily,

> soon after the Fall there developed an age of men who were once again able to gain control over nature. Since they were closest to the source of wisdom originally possessed by Adam, theirs was the most perfect philosophical truth in existence. It was these men who entangled the hidden secrets of nature in the 'integuments' of fables. (Garner, 277.)

This 'entangling' was not necessarily a straightforward process of one party encoding some information against the day another would become able to de-code it,[16] although Bacon does not dismiss this possibility. When he says, in the preface to *The Wisdom of the Ancients*,

> Upon the whole, I conclude with this: the wisdom of the primitive ages was either great or lucky; great, if they knew what they were doing and invented the figure to shadow the meaning; lucky, if without meaning or intending it they fell upon matter which gives occasion to such worthy contemplations. (Works 13:80),

he is leaving the door open to an interpretation of the myths, which he calls "fables," that closes the door to objections about their veracity. Bacon anticipates the objection that 'the primitive ages' had no great insight into natural philosophy, and counters with the assertion that he will allow such objectors their "gravity of judgement (of the dull and leaden order though it be)" (Works 13:79) but will still overpower such an interpretation with the conclusion that the original mythographers happened to record fables that providentially agree with "matter which gives occasion to such worthy contemplations."

It is ultimately a moot point whether or not the wisdom of the ancients was intentionally encoded, or is simply present in mythology as a result of the purest of providential actions. Bacon is prepared to accept it either way, although he does seem more readily disposed to entertain the belief that the ancients knew just what they were about. This preference results from his belief in the Christian myth of Genesis, including especially the Fall, and all its repercussions, particularly the understanding of the Fall as having separated humanity from nature as well as from God.[17] But another repercussion of his belief in the traditional Christian explication of the Fall is his chronological ascription of wisdom. Because the wisdom of the ancients is from an era markedly closer to that time when humanity's knowledge was perfect in Adam, it is a purer, more informed wisdom than is any that has since laid claim to the title. Until, that is, the advent of Bacon's own new instrument for the advancement of learning.

Bacon believed "only three revolutions and periods of learning can properly be reckoned; one among the Greeks, the second among the Romans, and the last among us ... and to each of these hardly two centuries can justly be assigned." The rest of human history, for Bacon, has been entirely unproductive "in respect of any rich or flourishing growth of the sciences" (*N.O.*, 1.78). Yet he believes, despite the cyclicality of history as he observes it, that by application of his new organum humanity can plot a consistently progressive course into its own future, and an integral part of this application is the restoration of that kind of knowledge which marked humanity's original state of grace, that knowledge which gave us, in the person of Adam, perfect knowledge of and complete power over nature. Bacon's new philosophy would provide us with this knowledge, or as much of it as we can possibly recover, but it would do so by way of its very particular method, and it is this method that Bacon sees as both a guarantor of the truth of what it produces and the means by which humanity will progress to a position of control over ourselves, our world, and our destiny.

> When I set before me the condition of these times, in which learning hath made her third visitation or circuit, in all the qualities thereof; as the excellency and vivacity of the wits of this age; the noble helps and lights which we have by the travails of ancient writers; the art of printing, which communicateth books to men of all fortunes; the openness of the world by navigation, which hath disclosed multitudes of experiments, and a mass of natural history; the leisure wherewith these times abound ... the consumption of all that ever can be said in controversies of religion, which have so much diverted men from other sciences ... I cannot but be raised to this persuasion, that this third period of time will far surpass that of the Graecian and Roman learning. (*Advancement*, Works 6:391-2.)

"The noble helps and lights" provided by the works of ancient writers include the myths which Bacon recalls in his Wisdom of the Ancients. This is the final qualification to be made concerning Bacon's use of the myths before turning to that one, "Orpheus: or Philosophy," that I and others argue is the centrepiece of Bacon's mythographic work: namely, that the myths are "noble helps and lights," not final answers or ultimate sources themselves of knowledge. The myths serve a dual purpose for Bacon: they are examples of the kinds of encoded knowledge possessed at as close to first-hand as post-lapsarian humanity can get to the state of knowledge enjoyed by Adam before the Fall, and they are examples of the encoding process itself, which makes them perfect for serving, as Stephen Daniel puts it, "as the guiding threads or models of inquiry within his method of discovery" (225).

* * *

> "Next to the word of God, natural philosophy is the most certain cure for superstition and the most

> approved nutriment of faith. Its rightful station is as the accepted and loyal handmaid of religion, for religion reveals the will of God, natural philosophy His power." (*Cogitata et Visa*, (1607) in Farrington, p. 78.)

As I said above, I am not the first to notice that in Wisdom of the Ancients Orpheus is the centrepiece, or perhaps more appropriately the cornerstone, of Bacon's philosophical message. Writing of Wisdom in 1960 Elizabeth Sewell said that "Bacon's ... philosophical Orpheus seems to preside over the whole work; Bacon ascribes to him two kinds of singing, the one relating to natural, the other to moral and civil, philosophy" (Sewell, 83). In a similar vein John Briggs observes "Orpheus is Bacon's paradigm for 'universal Philosophy' or the 'wisdom' he identifies with the new learning. The new sciences, which indeed promise to move or persuade 'all things'--rocks as well as beasts and human beings--are to be mastered with religious care rather than merely Herculean force" (Briggs, 1). In addition to the prominence they ascribe to Orpheus, the two foregoing passages also call to our attention other important aspects of Bacon's adaptation of the myth.

To deal with the most explicit, and so most obvious, first, Sewell's observation that Bacon has his Orpheus sing two kinds of philosophy is important because it makes us recognize on the one hand the nature of the connection Bacon sees between natural philosophy and its subordinate areas of speculation moral and civil philosophy, and on the other hand the social role Bacon prescribes for the natural philosopher (scientist): that being one of active engagement in the prescription of moral and civil dicta for the philosopher's society. In other words, Sewell's observation leads us to see in Bacon's Orpheus exactly those qualities cited above as primary among Bacon's reasons for turning to myth in his attempt to communicate his new philosophy. The myth of Orpheus is a prime example of the kind of encoded knowledge possessed at as close to first-hand as post-lapsarian humanity can get to the state of knowledge enjoyed by Adam before the Fall, and his myth is an example of the encoding process itself. Bacon's Orpheus is both matter and method. The subject matter deals with the movement from natural science to moral and civil philosophies, for, that is, the discovery of knowledge to its application in a broader social context, and the method is contained in a demonstration of this very activity: by the act of explicating the myth Bacon performs that action which he prescribes for his multi-talented and progressive new philosopher, he communicates the dis-covery of this very method (with-)in the vehicle of its discovery, the myth itself.

Briggs' observation calls to our attention two important aspects of Bacon's work. The first invites an interpretation of Bacon's Orpheus, "philosophy personified," (*Orpheus*, Works 13:110) as an example of Sidney's "right poet" who has, as one of his definitive characteristics, a duty to move people to virtuous action. Obviously, this must be done by persuasive rather than by coercive means. The second important aspect of Bacon's work called to our attention by Briggs' observation is the nature of the relationship between the Orphic poet/philosopher and the matter, "the new sciences," with which he must largely concern himself. Just as the Baconian philosopher must adopt the strategy of the Orphic poet with the aim of moving, or persuading, his audience, so the philosopher must open himself up to being moved by the natural world in order that he may then persuade others of the rightness of his own understanding. In Briggs' account then we see an activity very similar to the one we found in Sewell's. Again, Orpheus is portrayed as, like Bacon himself, the personification of engagement in a cyclical activity, one in which discovery and persuasion are interdependent and prone to looping back each upon the other, which engagement is aimed at progressing beyond its present state of comparative ignorance to a state in which knowledge, discovery, and persuasion enhance and are enhanced by each other--eventually to the point where their collective power of persuasion becomes irresistible.[18]

Bacon begins his version of the myth by assuring us that the story of Orpheus, despite its wide ranging familiarity, is not yet "in all points perfectly well interpreted," and one of the points he wants to ensure we discover is that Orpheus "seems meant for a representation of universal philosophy." What qualifies Orpheus for this interpretation is his ability to "subdue... and [draw] all things after him by sweet and gentle measures"(13:110). Thus we see how central to Bacon's conception of philosophy is the power to persuade.

Bacon divides his account of Orpheus roughly in half. In the first half we are given the brief introduction summarized immediately above, and then Bacon's skeletal re-counting of the events of the myth of Orpheus. In the second half, in keeping with the mythographical tradition within which Garner demonstrates he is working, we read Bacon's interpretation of the particular events of the myth, with each event--with one quite notable exception--allegorized in terms of Bacon's conception of the "end and goal of the sciences" (*N.O.*, 1.82).

In his re-telling of the myth Bacon picks up Orpheus' story at the moment when "moved by affection for his wife" Orpheus had "resolved to go down to Hell and beg her back again of the Infernal Powers; trusting to his lyre." Perhaps in respect of his introductory comment about the myth's widespread familiarity--"the story ... so well known"--Bacon's always crisp and concise style is as direct, as business-like, as ever as he reminds us of Orpheus' initial success: "Nor was he disappointed. For so soothed and charmed were the infernal powers by the sweetness of his singing and playing, that they gave him leave to take her away with him...." Even in his bare-bones telling of the myth itself, however, Bacon begins to lead his reader toward a particular interpretation. Familiar with the myth, the reader knows that Orpheus' attempt to retrieve Eurydice (whose name never appears in Bacon's "Orpheus") from the underworld is doomed to fail before Orpheus and his love regain the world of nature. But Bacon elaborates on the familiar version by providing the psychological reason for Orpheus' backward glance, the glance by which he violates his agreement with the infernal powers: "From this in the impatience of love and anxiety he could not refrain." "Love and anxiety" serves here as a synonym for "lust," which passion Bacon later names as one of those "put off" (i.e. 'denied,' or 'overcome') by the wild beasts as they are drawn to commune around Orpheus by the "same sweetness of his song and lyre" as he had earlier used to sway the infernal powers. After allowing his reason to be overcome by passion "Orpheus betook himself to solitary places, a melancholy man and averse from the sight of women..." Notice that Bacon drops all mention of Orpheus' geographical location. This is not only in response to the impulse to "English" the myth. It also strongly implies that wherever Orpheus is, there is the centre of the society his philosophy would build.

Bacon tells us of Orpheus' power over the beasts and that it extends over the woods and stones themselves:

> by the same sweetness of his song and lyre he drew to him all kinds of wild beasts, in such manner that putting off their several natures, forgetting all their quarrels and ferocity, no longer driven by the stings and furies of lust, no longer caring to satisfy their hunger or to hunt their prey, they all stood about him gently and sociably, as in a

> theatre, listening only to the concords of his lyre. Nor was that all: for so great was the power of his music that it moved the woods and the very stones to shift themselves and take their stations decently and orderly about him. (*Wisdom*, Works 13:110-11.)

Clearly Orpheus, "philosophy personified," is the centre of his society; he is the cultural core around whom all gather, and according to whose dicta all gently and sociably, decently and orderly, listen to the concords and feel the power of his music. It cannot be coincidence that music is a method of communication, as opposed to the matter it communicates. "All this went on for some time with happy success and great admiration," but the philosopher's ideal society is broken and destroyed by the Thracian Bacchanals who, by going unglossed, form the notable exception to the interpretation that forms the second half of Bacon's "Orpheus."

Here, the Bacchanals are as business-like as Bacon's own literary style. There are no tentative first thrusts of spears that are returned to their natural state by the power of Orpheus' song. Bacon's Bacchanals know how to achieve their end and waste no effort setting about it:

> first they blew such a hoarse and hideous blast upon a horn that the sound of his music could no longer be heard for the din: whereupon, the charm being broken that had been the bond of that order and good fellowship, confusion began again.... (110.)

The result of this attack is at once more specific and more cryptic in Bacon's account than it is in Golding's translation of Ovid. Specifically, "the beasts returned each to his several nature and preyed one upon the other as before; the stones and woods stayed no longer in their places: [and] Orpheus himself was torn to pieces by the women in their fury ... his limbs scattered about the fields

...." Cryptically, the response to Orpheus' death is the submergence of "Helicon (river sacred to the Muses) in grief and indignation ... under the earth, to reappear elsewhere." Although Bacon declines to say explicitly in Wisdom when or where the waters of Helicon might "reappear elsewhere," Timothy Paterson calls attention to Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* as he attempts to clarify Bacon's cryptic remark:

> As for the exact period during which the waters of Helicon (the river sacred to the Muses) plunged underground, and when they might "break out and issue forth again," Bacon declares his own age to be a worthy candidate to become the third great age of learning, the two previous being those of Greece and Rome...(4.77 [Brit.ed.] in Paterson, 439.)

Paterson's treatment of Bacon's presentation of the myth focuses, uniquely, on two important but not central elements of the interpretation that appears in the second half. Paterson misreads Bacon's interpretation by attempting to force a reading of Orpheus' "refer[ence] to natural philosophy" (13:111) into conformity with Paterson's own ideas about Bacon's desire for immortality.

> The central theme of his interpretation of the Orphic myth is the role played in the philosophic life by various forms of the aspiration to immortality, and his most astonishing suggestion, intimated rather than clearly stated for obvious prudential reasons, is that the original form this takes is the desire for bodily immortality. (Paterson, 433.)

As incredible as it seems, Paterson actually seems to be suggesting that Bacon had such a passion for the idea of living forever that he was unable or disinclined to prevent it from pushing its way into his mythography. Admittedly Bacon's version of the myth includes the following statement: "natural philosophy proposes to itself ... the restitution and renovation of things corruptible, and ... the conservation of bodies in the state in which they are in, and the retardation of dissolution and putrefaction." But to read such references as being primarily, and indeed only, directed toward the expression of a desire for physical, human, immortality is to ignore both the broader meanings of key words in the foregoing passage, and the broader appreciation of Bacon's program for the advancement of learning.

As we have seen, Bacon was very concerned with disabusing science of the use of those philosophies which he felt had been causing it to follow "a way to [the end and goal of the sciences] which is altogether erroneous and impassable" (*N.O.*, 1.82). One such system of scientific inquiry which Bacon saw as entirely wrongheaded and far too widely accepted was alchemy. And the OED tells us that "putrefaction" was an alchemical term in Bacon's day used "in reference to *inorganic* matter" to describe "the disintegration or decomposition of a substance by chemical or other action: also, the oxidation or corrosion of metals." Thus, Bacon's choice of a term that superficially seems to lend credence to Paterson's thesis turns out to be a careful and calculated demonstration that Bacon's new, Orphic philosophy has the power to overthrow and sweep away a currently influential but nonetheless misguided philosophy, alchemy. Nor are the other definitions of "putrefaction" then available for Bacon's use of any greater support to Paterson's thesis.[19] Nor do the definitions of "dissolution" lend Paterson any support, and the privileging of "bodies" over "things" is still sufficiently far from isolating human beings as the objects of interest for Bacon's mythographic interpretation as to be unworthy of further comment.

The second element toward which Paterson directs his attention is more important and less spurious. Paterson seems to be the only commentator to notice that "Bacon recounts that Orpheus was torn to pieces by 'Thracian women under the stimulation and excitement of Bacchus,' but offers no specific interpretation of this particular detail of the myth" (Paterson, 437). However, because of his very peculiar thesis about what the myth of Orpheus means to Bacon he then insists on complicating the explanation for this apparent omission by insisting that the Bacchanals represent, to Bacon, "religious frenzy or enthusiasm." While I find part of his explanation appealing, so far as it asserts that "philosophy, employing rhetoric, is capable of bringing ... peace and order ... to human societies" I also find it unlikely as a whole because as it continues it asserts that this peace and order, brought by philosophy, "is periodically destroyed by the eruption of depraved passions expressing themselves through religious frenzy or enthusiasm" (438). Paterson is directing his argument toward the contention that Bacon identifies himself with Orpheus along the following lines. Bacon's desire for bodily immortality is analogous to Orpheus' attempt to retrieve the physical body of Eurydice. His recognition that this desire will not be achieved, even by application of his new instrument of science, spurs him to attempt to achieve "the diluted and derivative 'immortality' produced by lasting fame" (435) which attempt is analogous to Orpheus' creation of social harmony between and among beasts, trees, and stones by way of his song. Once this identification is accepted, and there is no strong reason why it should not be up to this point, Paterson is positioned to advance the idea that one of the criteria necessary for Bacon to fulfil his desire for 'diluted and derivative immortality' is the power to dominate religion or religious "interference" in society. But we can see that accepting the identification of Bacon with Orpheus in no way implies the will to power over all other social institutions as asserted by Paterson's essay, unless we also accept the theory, rebutted above, that Bacon uses Orpheus as an expression of his desire for bodily immortality.

But if Paterson's explanation of the absence of the Bacchanals in Bacon's explanatory second half is flawed, how will this apparent omission be explained? Perhaps the explanation is too simple to be seen by someone as committed as is Paterson to the finding of deep-rooted psychological, Nietzschean drives. Earlier in his paper Paterson asks "Do the Thracian women under the influence of Bacchus represent anything more specific and historically concrete than some assumed general tendency of order periodically to lapse into disorder?" (438). Quite simply, the answer is "no." They do not. Paterson might do well to remind himself that prior to Nixon, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Dean, _et al_, not everyone was a conspiracy theorist. Bacon was too great of a thinker to have required that the historical cycles of decay he was able to trace from the downfall of Greece forward to his own time would each have demanded its own group of power-mad conspirators; he was too great a thinker to have believed that any such group could have manipulated the history of entire cultures in the ways that such beliefs would demand; and he was too much a Christian to perceive the dogma of the church as a rival for the new scientific method he was himself proposing. His "strict separation of religion and science is consistent from the *Valerius Terminus* (1603) to the *De Principiis atque Originibus* (1623-24)..." (Garner, 280).

Yet, if Bacon was not a conspiracy theorist, neither was he a fatalist. He had noted the tendency of great societies to degenerate, and he had also noted that they are sooner or later replaced by others, which in their turn then dissipate. But he was proposing an answer to this cycle, a way out for his Crown and his country. By commencing the study of nature according to a return to the method employed by those "primitive ages" that were closest to the time before the Fall when humanity had a complete knowledge of nature, and thus sovereignty and power over it, (Daniel, 230) Bacon would have his nation break out of the cycle of history and achieve the actual, physical immortality that Paterson mistakenly believes Bacon fool enough to desire for himself.

Bacon's identification with Orpheus, then, is not one that can be explained on a personal level. He does not single Orpheus out as the "representation of universal philosophy," that "without [which] I care not to live" (Dedicatory epistle "To his Nursing-Mother, The Famous University of Cambridge," Works 13:71) because he believes natural philosophy can make him immortal, either physically or in name. Rather, his Orphic identification is based on the cultural, or perhaps more precisely the national, centrality he ascribes to the role of philosophy and philosopher. The song he will sing is Orphic in its ability to draw together everything subject to natural law for the benefit of first his King, then his country, then humanity as a whole. Garner is on the right track when she says "his interests and goals in life were ... entirely anthropocentric. He was interested in mankind in general and his betterment through the development and rediscovery of scientific and moral knowledge" (289). But she stops short of getting to the heart of the matter. Bacon's "interest in mankind in general" was a political interest; it was one in which he would have humanity introduced to natural law so that we could then make the mythic connection between the irresistible power and patterns of God's method of governing the world and, as Julian Martin argues in Francis Bacon, The State, and the Reform of Natural Philosophy, the similar irresistibility of the patterns and so of the power of the Crown's way of governing us.

"Orpheus" serves Bacon as a description of the cyclical course human history has taken from the Fall to his own time.

> The disappearance and reemergence of the Helicon shows that 'the works of wisdom ... have their periods and closes.' When a civilization has flourished for a time, people 'return to the depraved conditions of their nature,' and philosophy is torn in pieces like Orpheus; but after the season of barbarism, the waters of learning 'break out and issue forth again' in other nations. (Guibbory, 53.)

His *Novum Organum* and his plan for *The Advancement of Learning* serve as his answer to this cyclical course and the "periods and closes" that mark the death of each society as it succumbs to the depraved passions engendered by ill-conceived and unfounded systems of thought. By admitting his new philosophy into the centre of society's power, Bacon would have the Crown break the cycle, avoid degeneracy, and ensure for itself and its commonweal an irresistible progress through history toward immortality. What Bacon would probably first have desired was a successful end to his political designs. Ironically, the means he advocated for achieving that end, the promulgation and widespread adaptation of empiricism, outlived him and the object of his service.

Chapter 3

The Social Mission of an Uncouth Swain

In his own way, John Milton was every bit as politically driven as was Francis Bacon. For twenty years, from 1641 to 1660, he suppressed[20] his deeply held conviction that he was born to be an epic poet[21] in order that he might devote his energies more fully to the writing of political pamphlets in support of the Puritan Revolutionary cause. Milton's active interest in politics bears mentioning here because it was not a tap to be turned on or off as he would; just as his facility for language informs his overtly political prose, so too do his political convictions inform his poetry.

Those political convictions are to be found throughout Milton's work, and there is in both Milton's prose and his poetry that rarest of all qualities, the quality of the true believer. His political convictions and his deeply held beliefs are not separate attributes. Milton's political convictions are born of his religious beliefs. Yet, if it is not strange for us, in the post-Watergate era, to reconstruct the political single-mindedness with which Bacon approached life, it will be decidedly odd for many of us to discover that Milton possessed a similar political single-mindedness. In fact, in even his most poetic and most sacred writing he was engaged in advocating political reform similar to the way Bacon was in his writing: even if their respective positions were antithetical on the central point of the authority of the Crown. And in Milton's political reform, we see him most clearly as a true believer. That he is a true believer in Christianity is news to no one. But he is also a true believer in the political power of Christianity. And the manner in which he would manifest the power of this belief will be examined in this chapter with a view toward informing our reading of his most famous pastoral elegy, *Lycidas* (1637), in the following chapter. Throughout this examination, as throughout Milton's prolific career, Orpheus appears as a recurrent image which helps Milton to justify his poetic calling, which serves him as a source of personal inspiration, and which provides a window on what could have been seen as a seditious attack on the Church of England at the height of Archbishop Laud's censorious power (See pp.102-4, below).

It comes as a great surprise to me, a non-Christian, that Milton (or anyone, for that matter) should have a vision of the political power of Christianity.[22] I have long thought that Christianity is a philosophy designed to hold its power in perpetual abeyance, in the promise of a reward or punishment to be paid or meted out after the death of the individual. In other words, I have believed that for the individual Christianity promised a power not to be realized in this life, and that for society it delivered only the power of organizational stability--a way of keeping the masses orderly and in their place. But Milton, like many others who may be described by "that over-worked word ... 'Puritanism'" (Hill, 17), envisioned a Christianity of an entirely more active and engaged order. Milton also saw too clearly what orthodox Christianity had already become, even, or perhaps especially, in seventeenth-century England: a church populated by self-serving "blind mouths" (*Lyc.*, 119) who had lost sight of the truths inherent in primitive Christianity; a church often seen to be figured in "that fatal and perfidious bark" (100) which is the final culprit and cause of Lycidas' drowning.[23] My own former misapprehension and Milton's recognition of what he saw around him are not dissimilar. This recognition of the corrupt abuse of Christianity for hegemonic reasons--the consolidation of Laud's and of Charles' power--fuelled Milton's drive for a reformation of his society and must surely have instilled in him the reformational zeal that gave him the strength to write, and continue to write, prose tracts while he contained the ever-present drive to write his Christian epic.

In "Literature as Context: Milton's *Lycidas*" Northrop Frye writes

> If we ask what inspires a poet, there are always two answers. An occasion, an experience, an event, may inspire the impulse to write. But the impulse to write can only come from previous contact with literature, and the formal inspiration, the poetic structure that crystallizes around the new event, can only be derived from other poems. (211.)

While we might agree with Frye's analysis as far as it goes, we must conclude that it does not go far enough. We must add to these another answer: the system of values, or structure of beliefs, that informs all aspects of the poet's life. For Milton, this was his Christianity and, within the same structure: the millenarian, and perhaps even the mortalist, beliefs he would eventually adopt; his belief that England was God's chosen nation; and because England was God's chosen nation his belief that he owed to Christ and to the world poetic expression of the truths and power of his vision of Christianity.

Milton's system of beliefs also included a belief in the necessity of a rational, empirical--what we might call a scientific--as opposed to a disputatious or scholastic education, as is quite evident in 1644's *Of Education*. This adoption of the scientific discovery of knowledge suggests a frame of mind unconducive to accepting received authority, and so makes him the likeliest of candidates to question the authority of the church. His belief in the power of natural philosophy, i.e. science, to reveal the truth derived in part from his familiarity with the thinking of Francis Bacon. In fact, according to Christopher Hill it is

> From 'our Bacon', whom he regarded as one of 'the greatest and sublimest wits in sundry ages',and

> perhaps from [George] Hakewill, [that] Milton acquired a belief in the possibility of an almost unlimited improvement in the conditions of material life--so great it might undo the intellectual consequences of the Fall of Man. This should be the object of education, Milton declared in 1644; although full truth would not be known until Christ's Second Coming. (Hill, 36.)

Milton's rejection of scholasticism, "this unseemly battle of words [which] tends neither to the general good nor to the honour and profit of our country" is concomitant with his adoption of the then new scientific approach to the pursuit of knowledge, the general good, honour and profit of the country being "generally considered the supreme purpose of all sciences" (*Third Prolusion*, CPW, 1:246). Also in lock-step with his adoption and advocacy of the scientific method is Milton's tendency toward intellectual radicalism. The pervasive scepticism of twentieth-century intellectual enquiry is not to be taken for granted in seventeenth-century England. It was a lesson that was still being learned, and the outcome of which was the demandingly querulous attitude necessary to spawn any radicalism.

Hill tells us that

> various influences combined to push Milton in a radical direction. From his father he learnt that authority ... could be disobeyed. From his parents (probably), from [the rector of his parish] Richard Stock and Thomas Young [a Scottish minister and one of his masters at St. Paul's School] certainly, he learnt to be critical of the episcopal state church. .... From the younger [Alexander] Gil Milton heard a great deal of criticism of court and government. Milton was expressing hostility towards monarchy while still a schoolboy. From the elder Gil he learnt that reason had a place in religious discussion.... [W]e may assume that he was already familiar with Bacon, Hakewill and Dorislaus as well as with Fludd and the Hermetic tradition. Milton was aware of a crisis in the universities.... He was also aware of a crisis in literature and the arts, of a religious crisis caused by the Laudian regime. During the sixteen-thirties he may have come to see all these as one crisis. (39-40.)

The "Laudian regime" to which Hill refers is the Church of England under Archbishop Laud (1633-45), but Laud's power extended so far into internal affairs of state, and his persecution of Puritans was so keenly felt that Parliament tried and executed him in 1645 (see pp.102-4, below).

The radicalism Hill sees emanating from the various influences he cites in the foregoing passage can be seen in Milton's poetry. His sonnet XVIII, "On the late massacre at Piemont," although not written until 1655 when he would have been in his late forties, is nonetheless a heartfelt questioning of authority: of the authority of Cromwell's Puritan Parliament and even of the authority of God as it extends to the protection of His people.[24] As the likelihood of questioning authority tends to lessen as one ages, its presence in sonnet XVIII suggests that we should look for it in earlier works, such as *Lycidas*. Everyone who has read *Lycidas* since the appendage of the headnote in 1645 knows that it is a criticism of the episcopal state church. While in his teens Milton translated Psalms that implied criticism of the monarchy (Hill, 27-8). And of course all have recognized in Paradise Lost Milton's belief in the place of reason in religious discussion. Clearly, Milton's politics and his intellectual radicalism are displayed as much in his poetry as in his prose.

This display of political conviction in his poetry is no doubt due to the fact that for Milton Christianity was an integral part of every aspect of contemporary life. That is, Christianity was every bit as political for Milton as was natural philosophy for Bacon. In his Seventh Prolusion, "Delivered in the College Chapel in Defense of Learning an Oration," and entitled "Learning Makes Men Happier than does Ignorance" Milton writes that "nothing can rightly be considered as contributing to our happiness unless it somehow looks both to that everlasting life as well as to our life as citizens of this world" (*Seventh Prolusion*, 623a). The two lives, the life of the soul and the life of the body, become fused in his adoption of the heretical doctrine of mortalism. Hill writes that

> Mortalism emphasized the importance of this life. Seeing man as part of nature ... mortalists like [Richard] Overton, [John] Reeve and Milton were in this respect more scientific and rational than many of the scientists. (321).

It comes as no surprise by this point to hear that Milton was "scientific and rational," qualities he shared in common with and admired in Bacon. Nor should it be surprising that he would at some point adopt as part of the entirety of his beliefs a component, mortalism, that by emphasizing the unity of body and soul placed a corollary emphasis on life in this mortal coil.

Mortalism had no place in the theology of the Church of England, nor in the mainstream Puritanism that was becoming increasing popular in the years 1600 to 1640. Admittedly, we cannot know Milton was a mortalist when he wrote *Lycidas* in 1637, any more than we can know he was not. But we do know that eventually he became a mortalist and it makes more sense to surmise that such an unorthodox aspect of belief evolved than to suppose that one day it simply sprang unbidden into the mind.

Hill notes that "in his 'most precious and dearest possession' [*De Doctrina Christiana*] Milton devoted very little space to 'the other', that immortal life which should be the crown of Christian hopes." This is because "mortalism was a ... more this-worldly doctrine than orthodox Christianity" (323). Furthermore, Hill notes that while we should not "attach too much importance to the fact that the dead Edward King [is] described ... as sleeping" nonetheless "the hope of immortality is neither central to the poem nor the note on which it ends. 'Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new' brings us back to face the everyday life still going on" (317; 323). We might note that this final expression of concern with the this-worldly is one that we see also at the ends of Milton's three major poems, *Paradise Lost* (1667; 1674), *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes* (1671). We might also note that in lines 168-9 of *Lycidas* "the day-star [sinks] in the Ocean bed,/ And yet anon repairs his drooping head" like Lycidas, like Orpheus. If, as seems likeliest, Milton was not a mortalist when he wrote *Lycidas*, mortalist sentiments of the kind Hill ascribes to Milton (317-23) are yet not wholly inapplicable to a discussion of that poem.

In the foregoing quotation from the *Seventh Prolusion* (p.61, above) Milton significantly modifies orthodox Christian doctrine: whatever we would have contribute to our happiness must look as much to this world as to the next. Christianity thus becomes an active force in this world. This Christianity inspires the poet as much as do the two answers Frye provides to the question of inspiration, and, in fact, probably does more so.

If Milton's mortalism is heretical even to most Puritans, his millenarianism is not. Joseph Mede, a Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge (Fellow 1614-38), during Milton's time there

> believed that the Pope was Antichrist, and had a carefully worked-out chronological scheme of his decline and fall.... Mede was cautious about giving precise dates for the end of the world, but he expected it between 1625 and 1716.... His timetable was influential among Presbyterian and Independent divines, and almost certainly contributed to Milton's belief that Christ's coming was 'shortly expected'. (Hill, 33.)

Although it is not known if Milton studied directly under Mede, there is much of the latter's teachings in Milton's writing (including an affinity for Bacon). Speculation has long had it that Mede is the "Old Damaetas" referred to in line 36 of *Lycidas*. Robert Gell, who likely performed Milton's third wedding, was also a Fellow at Christ's (1623-39) when Milton was there and he too "anticipated the Second Coming in the near future" (Hill, 34). The influence of millenarianism in Milton's thought accounts as much as does his mortalism for the political activism of his Christianity.

As early as 1539 Sir Richard Morison had asked "See ye not to what honour God calleth our nation?" Richard "Fitz's privy church of 1567-8 saw England as the Israel which God favoured," and the future Bishop Aylmer (1521-94; appointed Bishop of London 1577) declared "God is English" (Hill, 280). As we saw in the previous chapter, Francis Bacon also considered England to have been chosen to fulfill a providential destiny. The belief that "God is English" had enjoyed a long history before Milton adopted it, but adopt it he did. In 1641's *Animadversions* (CPW, 1:704) Milton wrote

> For he being equally neere to his whole Creation of Mankind, and of free power to turn his benefick and fatherly regard to what Region or Kingdome he pleases, hath yet ever had this Iland under the special indulgent eye of his providence.

And as Arthur Barker points out, Milton "wrote of man's destiny with eloquence and profound conviction at a time when the democratic theory of society was receiving its first practical formulation" (xiv). Thus, we can read the concluding couplet of sonnet VII, 1632, as an expression of Milton's conviction that he in his role as poet and England in its role of chosen nation were unfolding a political history that for all its newness was unfolding according to divine intent: "All is, if I have grace to use it so,/ As ever in my great task-Master's eye" (*Sonnet VII*, "How soon hath time...," 77).

* * *

Now that we have established the pedigree of Milton's political convictions in his Christianity, we must next consider the implications of his convictions for his poetry. One way to do this is to look at the recurrence of Orpheus throughout his poetry. The reason for this is simple; Orpheus is centrally important to *Lycidas* and *Lycidas* is Milton's most concise expression of his conception of his own role as poet in a society that he feels must be reformed according to the truth as he sees it.

Patricia Vicari accurately notices that

> In Milton's poetry, chronologically, we have three Orpheuses. The first, in Elegy 6, is Orpheus the priest-magician-philosopher, aged and austere, in the lonely mountains of Strymon taming the animals. The second is Orpheus the lover and musician, seeking his beloved even in hell and liberating her with his charming song. The third is the torn poet, victim of the maddened crowd. In the period from the end of the Roman Empire to the end of the Renaissance, these portraits of Orpheus succeeded each other in more or less the same order. (215.)

John Broadbent, writing in the Cambridge Introduction to Paradise Lost tends to corroborate the evolution of the myth noted by Vicari, and he adds "the death and dismemberment were stressed more and more into the 17th century. .... References to Orpheus' death are in justification of poetry itself in despite of public distrust.... the severed head cannot be silenced" (83).

It is therefore probably not a coincidence that the third Orpheus, "the torn poet," emerges in Milton's poetry at the end of what we might call his 'reading tour' of the Ancient World: the five year period of intensive, self-directed study at Hammersmith and Horton from 1632 to 1638 during which time "he was consciously and deliberately preparing himself to be the poet who would speak to and for the English nation" (Hill, 39). It is clearly this torn

Orpheus who appears again and again in *Lycidas*. Of "the second ... Orpheus the lover and musician" Vicari might well be thinking of the companion poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, thought to have been composed about 1631. But the "priest-magician-philosopher, aged and austere," the first Orpheus Vicari identifies in the poetry of Milton and in the broader evolution of the myth, is to be found most evidently in 1629's *Elegia Sexta* (*Elegy Six*).

The allusions to Orpheus found in *Elegy Six*, however they portray Orpheus (and I repeat that I find Vicari's assessment essentially accurate) function to justify poetry and to sacralize the role of the poet. *Elegy Six* is a letter "To [Milton's good friend] Charles Diodati When He was Visiting in the Country," and has long been taken (at least since Tillyard presented it as such, in 1938's *Setting*, pp.177-9) "as a serious self-dedication to poetry" (Milton, 50). In it, Milton asks Diodati the rhetorical question "But why do you complain that poetry is a fugitive from wine and feasting?" to which he immediately supplies the rebuttal: "Song loves Bacchus and Bacchus loves songs." Bacchus, we recall, in his position as God of Wine was the god the revellers who beheaded Orpheus were engaged in celebrating. We must further recall that Bacchus was himself so disgusted with the actions of his revellers that he abandoned them to their communal fate, and absented himself from their lands henceforward. Consequently, he is in no way personally responsible for the death of the archetypal poet, and the actions he takes following those of his worshippers show him to be the lover of songs here characterized by Milton. Elsewhere, in Natale Conti's *Mythologiae*, first published in 1568 but "published in over twenty-five editions from 1568 to 1653" (Mulryan, 37), Bacchus is characterized as being the Muses' friend because "the heat of wine awakens genius" (*Mythologiae*, V, xiii, p.506; quoted in Milton, 50n). As Mulryan points out, there are too many similarities between Milton's use of classical mythology and Conti's (and another Italian mythographer, Vincenzo Cartari's, author of *Imagini*, 1556) presentation of it for the former to be wholly independent of the latter.[25] In his analysis of *Lycidas*, Mulryan makes it clear that Bacchus, by virtue of his being "the god of the vine," was thought of as "the source of poetic inspiration" (41). For Milton, then, the connection between Bacchus and Orpheus runs much deeper than is initially suggested by the riot of the Bacchanals, and it is used here to enhance our appreciation of the versatility of poetry and the poet.

The very next line of *Elegy Six* tells Diodati that "Phoebus was not ashamed to wear the garland of ivy and to prefer its leaves to his own laurel." Phoebus is of course Apollo, the father of Orpheus. The laurel is the tree associated with him, and by long tradition with victory and with distinction in poetry (from whence the term "poet laureate"). Milton knows as we do that Apollo saves Orpheus' severed head and sets it up as his oracle, or spokesperson. The OED tells us that ivy "was anciently sacred to Bacchus." Thus the relationship Milton establishes between Phoebus and ivy makes the allusion to Orpheus unmistakable while at the same time conjuring an image of poetic worthiness (from the immediately evident symbol of the 'laurel of victory' to the more subtle one of the poet laureate) that does indeed function to justify poetry and to sacralize the role of the poet. Elsewhere in *Elegy Six* Milton refers to "the Thracian lyre" which is too obvious a reference to Orpheus to require explication, save to say that this reference too is used to justify the interaction of poetry with daily life in "the tapestried halls" where Diodati finds himself.

Milton's justification of poetry and the poet in *Elegy Six* provides a remarkable foreshadowing of what he will do more subtly and with greater poetic grace almost ten years later in *Lycidas*. Although his Orpheus changes from the "aged and austere priest-magician-philosopher" to the "torn poet, victim of the maddened crowd," his sense that Orpheus is a metaphor for civilization and for the centrally important role the poet is to play in the shaping of his civilization remains exceptionally constant. Of the poet and his role Milton writes:

> he whose theme is wars and heaven under Jupiter in his prime, and pious heroes and chieftains half-divine, and he who sings now of the sacred counsels of the gods on high, and now of the infernal realms where the fierce dog howls, let him live sparingly, like the Samian teacher; and let herbs furnish his innocent diet. Let the purest water stand beside him in a bowl of beech and let him drink sober draughts from the pure spring. Beyond this, his youth must be innocent of crime and chaste, his conduct irreproachable and his hands stainless. His character should be like yours, O Priest, when, glorious with sacred vestments and lustral water, you arise to go into the presence of the angry deities. (*Elegy Six*, 52.)

This passage resonates with allusions to Orpheus as it paints the portrait of the self-imposed life of studious, sober, intentional innocence Milton will lead over the next several years--which life many have held to be the very subject of the fears and uncertainties raised in response to what Tillyard, Frye, and others have mistaken to be 'the occasion, the experience, the event' that precipitates *Lycidas*. With Orpheus never far from his mind in this poem, Milton speaks of "the infernal realms" where "neyther Pluto nor his Ladie were so strong/ And hard of stomacke to withold [Orpheus'] petition long" (Golding, 10.49-51). It cannot be coincidence that Pluto and Persephone are recalled to our thoughts in a passage that speaks of "the angry deities" into whose presence the Priest, like Orpheus, must go. Thus we see forming in Milton's thoughts what will soon become the usurpation of the role of the priest by that of the poet.

The exceptional constancy to be noted between the austere character of the poet in the foregoing passage and of the would-be priest in *Lycidas* demonstrates how completely concerned was Milton with the sacredness of his poetic calling. Many read *Lycidas* as a questioning of the very doctrine by which he has been ordering his life because they believe the death of Edward King to have been the impulse that generated the poem. His withdrawal from Cambridge and from the wider world generally in favour of the rigorous course of reading and study in which he engages during his years at Horton has indeed been a move calculated to qualify him for the 'priesthood' of the poet. His life has been the self-disciplined, self-restrained, stringently moral, strict, and abstinent life said to be fitting and proper for the poet-priest in *Elegy Six* as later in *Lycidas*. But it will be worth the effort. The stakes for which Milton knew himself to be playing, the soul of a nation as much as the soul of a man, were too high to admit the injustice of failure.

There is one final important connection to be made between *Elegy Six* and *Lycidas*. Shortly after explicitly naming "Orpheus," to whom he has been alluding throughout the poem, "in his old age, when he tamed the wild beasts among the lonely caves," Milton declares that "truly, the bard is sacred to the gods and is their priest. His hidden heart and his lips alike breath out Jove" (*Elegy Six*, 52). This completes Milton's construction of the poet-priest and of his sacred vocation on the foundation laid by repeated allusions and references to Orpheus. The sacredness of the bard, indeed Milton's choice of the word "bard," have important ramifications for our understanding of *Lycidas*. The shift to a third person narrative at l.186 of that poem, and the clothing of "the uncouth swain" in a "Mantle blue" (192), when combined with a recognition of Milton's understanding of the sacred role of the bard, will complete the identification of the poet with his poem and with an Orpheus who, because of the divine power of a properly conceived and applied Christianity, need no longer be "the torn poet, victim of the maddened crowd."

The "second" Orpheus to be discerned in Milton's poetry, "the lover and musician, seeking his beloved in hell and liberating her with his charming song" (Vicari, 215), informs one of his unofficial 'defences of poetry' *Ad Patrem*, written in 1637, as well as the companion poems, written much earlier, in 1631, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Before considering the Orpheus who contributes so much to Milton's poetry during this period, I must qualify Vicari's assessment. Neither in the myth as we have seen it nor in Milton's thinking about the myth does Orpheus liberate "His half-regain'd Eurydice" (*L'Allegro*, 150). Ultimately, he fails. As we have seen, his descent to retrieve Eurydice has a tradition in Renaissance mythography of being interpreted as the general human tendency to allow passion to overcome reason. Accordingly, he must fail if he will go on to achieve that for which in the Renaissance he is most justifiably famous--the creation of a civilized society. In Milton no less than in Bacon Orpheus' greatness lies not in the strength of his passion but in the strength of his song, his eloquence, his powers of persuasion--which his passion merely provides an opportunity to demonstrate. It is not a failure of these powers--he does persuade "the angry deities"--but a failure of his reason to control his passion that denies Eurydice her liberty and Orpheus his happiness. Hence, the Orpheus we see in Milton, like the one we have seen in Bacon, is at no time one whose value lies in his reputed ability to deny physical death its sway. If Orpheus has achieved a kind of immortality, that achievement lies firmly in his ability to civilize a society through the power of his words.

Although focused on Milton's prose, Arthur Barker's Milton and the Puritan Revolution 1641-1660 makes an interesting point which can be interpreted in terms of his use of Orpheus in his early poetry. Barker writes:

> The dominating force in the ... immediate ... background ... of his thought ... was the ideology of Puritanism. As Professor Woodhouse has shown, this rested in its varied manifestations, from the Presbyterians of the right, through the Independents of the centre, to the Sectaries of the left, on 'the effort to erect the holy community and to meet, with different degrees of compromise and adjustment, the problem of its conflict with the world.' Milton's aim in the prose was the achievement of the holy community as he saw it. (xxi.)

I say again, Milton's active political interest was not a tap to be turned on or off. The aim Barker identifies in the prose is also always part of his poetry: "the achievement of the holy community as he saw it." This helps to account for the extensive use Milton makes of the myth of Orpheus. Recall that Marilyn Williamson says (p.11, above) "the significance of Orphic song for both the social order and religious worship has been a fundamental and continuing feature of the myth from the beginning..." and that "many Renaissance and seventeenth-century writers follow Horace in calling Orpheus a civilizer of men, a lawgiver, and a builder of cities..." (378). Along the same line, Broadbent says: "some thought the poet was the father of lies, but Orpheus was called in to prove them wrong: poetry civilized" (82). Orpheus' ability to reconfigure the world around him and to create in that world a civilization in which his song was the central organizing principle appealed to Milton's desire to do the same for his world, an England oppressed by a censor who seemed to be moving the state church ever closer to what Milton would call the Babylonian whore, that great evil, Rome.[26]

L'Allegro and *Il Penseroso* offer interesting use of the myth of Orpheus, and do so in a way that prefigures its use in *Lycidas*. Williamson, in "The Myth of Orpheus in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*" calls our attention to the fact that "one of the important links between the poems is an allusion to the Orpheus legend in each" (377). She uses the Orpheus link to demonstrate convincingly that "the first poem [*L'Allegro*] is not a shallow prelude to the second, but its true companion" (377). This has to be true of a poem whose subject matter is the pleasures of this earth when it is written by an author whose concern for the current state of affairs on this earth is as great as Milton's. True, *Il Penseroso* is properly to be read as following *L'Allegro*, as though in answer to the shortcomings of Mirth. I do not say that Milton is offering the first poem as a complete and adequate response to the demands of this world on the individual. Rather, I join Williamson in saying that those who have dismissed *L'Allegro* as representing only a "'surface world' and a lower level of experience" (377) are mistaken.[27]

It is interesting to note the direction in which *L'Allegro* (the cheerful man)[28] moves the reader:

> from country to city, from simple and fundamental rural pleasures to more complex and sophisticated ones: from a barnyard with cock and hens, a hill, a wood, farm land, to towered cities with tournaments, masques, the professional theatre. (Williamson, 380.)

In other words, *L'Allegro* moves us from a world of little order toward a more highly ordered one. And it is a specific order: the order of the song; which we encounter at the end of the poem when we find the ultimate pleasure: "soft Lydian Airs,/ Married to immortal verse" (136-7). This 'marriage' highlights the importance of meaning in song. The music, "soft Lydian Airs," is not unimportant, but it must be "married to immortal verse,/ Such as the meeting soul may pierce" (136-8) in order that it may

> Untwist... all the chains that tie
> The hidden soul of harmony;
> That Orpheus' self may heave his head
> From golden slumber on a bed
> Of heapt Elysian flow'rs, and hear
> Such strains as would have won the ear
> Of Pluto, to have quite set free
> His half-regain'd Eurydice (143-50).

While recognizing the power of Orpheus' song, he also recognizes the limitations of its power: Orpheus only half-regained Eurydice. If Mirth can provide *L'Allegro* with the power to unchain the "hidden soul of harmony," i.e. to fully release the power of the poet which is the ultimate power to create and to order society, then L'Allegro will remain with her.

This hopeful, prophetic implication is also hinted at earlier in the poem when Milton introduces a figure familiar from the myth of Orpheus, Hymen, god of the wedding feast. Once the poem's celebration of pleasures has moved into the more civilized realm of the "Tower'd Cities" (117) "There let Hymen oft appear/ In Saffron robe, with Taper clear" (125-6). The unclouded taper of this Hymen implies a similarly clear prophecy for the civilization to be built up around the song the poet will sing if given the power to untwist the hidden soul of harmony. This hopeful sign contrasts directly with the equally prophetic, though entirely despairing, sign at the wedding of Orpheus and Eurydice.

> [Hymen] came in deede at Orphyes call: but neyther did he sing
> The woordes of that solemnitie, nor merry countnance bring,
> Nor any handsell of good lucke. His torche with drizling smoke
> Was dim: the same to burne out cleere, no stirring could provoke. (Golding, 10:3-6.)

Far from being concerned only with "a surface world," we can see that *L'Allegro* draws from as deep a well of allusive material as do any of Milton's poems, and that the result is a vision of personal prophetic hope for his poetic calling.

In *Il Penseroso* we get perhaps the last glimpse of the "aged and austere" Orpheus of Milton's early poetry. Williamson says that "*Il Penseroso* is the poem of the Orpheus who could make the gods weep" (384) and while this image is certainly in keeping with what Vicari has identified as the second Orpheus of Milton's career--"the lover and musician, seeking his beloved in hell and liberating her with his charming song" (215)--the Orpheus of *Il Penseroso* is also "the singer who can interpret the ways of gods to man, who wandered solitary and distant from his fellows, the prophetic, vatic figure, whose father may have been Apollo himself. This singer is a more austere figure" (Williamson, 385) than is the Orpheus of *L'Allegro*. This Orpheus is also mentioned in the same breath as two of English poetry's greatest figures, Spenser and Chaucer (ll.105-20). In closing his reference to these three paradigmatic poets, Milton writes that in their poetry "more is meant than meets the ear" (120). Song, that is, is more important than mere music. And too we see quite overtly a large part of Orpheus's peculiar significance for Milton. Not merely a great poet, Orpheus is also "the prophetic, vatic figure ... who can interpret the ways of gods to man." He is a figure ideally suited for the duty of expressing and explaining, and thereby justifying, "the ways of God to men" (PL, 1:26).

One of Milton's unofficial defences of poetry is a Latin poem "to his father" (English translation of the Latin title) *Ad Patrem*, dated about 1637. In it, as Merritt Hughes suggests, we can see among other things Milton's "faith in his own destiny as an epic poet" (*Ad Patrem*, 82). We can also see once again Milton favouring meaningful song over mere music, and using Orpheus specifically to make this point. *Ad Patrem* also helps us to understand the persuasive ministering role Milton sees the poet playing in human society.

Ad Patrem is offered in defence of Milton's desire to be a poet rather than, as it seems his father would have preferred, a priest or failing that a lawyer (Hill, 23). Hence, he tells his father

> You should not despise the poet's task, divine song, which preserves some spark of Promethean fire and is the unrivalled glory of the heaven-born human mind and an evidence of our ethereal origin and celestial descent. The gods on high love song and song has power to move the frightful depths of Tartarus and to bind the gods below and control the implacable shades with triple adamant. By song Apollo's priestesses and the trembling Sibyl, with blanched features, lay bare the mysteries of the far-away future. (*Ad Patrem*, 83.)

Divine song, the provision of which is the poet's task, is evidence of our connection to God. This conception of poetry and the poet's task helps explain Milton's sense of duty regarding the poetic expression of the truths and power of his vision of Christianity. Divine song manifests the difference between humanity and the beasts who seem in so many other ways to share our mortal coil; it demonstrates the unrivalled glory of the human mind! By virtue of this manifestation it provides clear evidence that our origin lies in God. Then, in a rhetorical manoeuvre similar to the one remarked earlier in the *Seventh Prolusion*, Milton reverses the flow of divine communication. Not only does the poet's craft demonstrate divine origins and remnants of divine being in and to humanity, it can also empower humanity to talk to God. Just as Sidney's Right Poet has the power to move his audience, so the poet espousing Milton's divine song has the power to move his; but in this case that audience is presented as a metaphor for destiny, and so, by extension, for God. If we recollect the myth of Orpheus at this point, we remember that part of Orpheus' argument to win back Eurydice was that the underworld, the frightful depths of Tartarus, "becomes our latest home:/ And [Pluto and Persephone] doo over humaine kynd reigne longest tyme" (Golding, 10:36-7). The combination of this recollection with recognition of the ability "to move the frightful depths of Tartarus and to bind the gods below" strongly suggests that Milton is telling us that divine song has the power to shape our future by a particular channel. Milton is here displacing the priest with the poet and suggesting that prayer takes a different form from that traditionally conceived of in the orthodox Christian church. This may be the ultimate Protestant sentiment: only frame your song correctly, and you will be able to move even God Himself.

Later in the poem Milton specifically uses the myth of Orpheus to define "song," as opposed to music, and to say that it is song, i.e. the meaningful, communicative part as opposed to the melodic part of music, that performs the (Right) Poet's task of inducing motion on the world around him. Of the mere "inane modulation of the voice without words and meaning and rhythmic eloquence" (*Ad Patrem*, 84) Milton says

> Such music is good enough for the forest choirs, but not for Orpheus, who by his song--*not by his cithara*--restrained rivers and gave ears to the oaks, and by his singing stirred the ghosts of the dead to tears. That fame he owes to his song. (*Ad Patrem*, 84; my emphasis.)

Orpheus' power comes from his poetry, not from his lyre. And his power takes two forms here: the power to move, as with Sidney's ideal of the Right Poet, and the power of the only kind of earthly immortality a person can hope for, "fame."

Milton continues his poem to his father with this idea of lasting fame in mind, and makes many allusions to things classical, religious, and modern which, taken cumulatively, point to the "faith in his own destiny as an epic poet" of which Hughes speaks. The allusions are too many to be repeated in full, but the following is a telling and representative passage.

> Dear father, after I had got the mastery of the language of Romulus and the graces of Latin, and acquired the lofty speech of the magniloquent Greeks, which is fit for the lips of Jove himself, ... you persuaded me to add the flowers which France boasts and the eloquence which the modern Italian pours from his degenerate mouth--testifying by his accent to the barbarian wars--and the mysteries uttered by the Palestinian prophet. And finally, all that heaven contains and earth... (*Ad Patrem*, 84-5).

Milton contends his father has given him the means to know. No one could miss the self-confidence of this passage, bordering as it does on out-right arrogance. Here is a poet supremely confident of his grasp of his material. Here is a poet telling his benefactor that he has acquired all the knowledge and the linguistic skill necessary to write an epic poem addressing all that Western Europe cared to reconstruct of human history.

The idea of lasting fame is prominently displayed in the last lines of the poem when Milton adopts the conventional poetic posture of addressing his lines to posterity.

> And you, my juvenile verses and amusements, if only you dare hope for immortality and a life and a glimpse of the light beyond your master's funeral pyre, and if dark oblivion does not sweep you down into the throngs of Hades, perhaps you will preserve this eulogy and the name of the father whom my song honors as an example to remote ages. (*Ad Patrem*, 86.)

While coming as close as Milton ever does to pretending humility, this closing passage betrays the adoption of such a stance by the very use of the word "song." After so unmistakably making his point earlier that song is what the poet uses not simply to move humanity but even to reach the ears of God, Milton here describes his own work as just that: "my song." How, we are expected to realize, could it possibly fail? Yet if Milton's confidence does cross over the line to arrogance in *Ad Patrem* he must be to some extent vindicated by the accuracy of this minor prophecy. It is his song, this one as well as more famous ones, that have conferred the relative immortality of fame on him and by association on his father. From this openly prophetic declaration of the intent to pursue the power and fame that is the poet's due, I want now to move to one of those more famous poems, *Lycidas*, and to look at the way in which all the elements of the power of the archetypal poet, Orpheus, are brought to bear in a single poem.

Chapter 4

Championing the Doves of Chaonia:[29]
Reading *Lycidas* as an Assertion of the Power of the Christian Poet

Lycidas is a pastoral elegy and an occasional poem. It has become a virtual commonplace in discussions about the poem to begin with a statement of these facts. But having established as much, the alert reader is already faced with questions to which answers are not immediately apparent. 'Why is *Lycidas* a pastoral elegy?' and 'how important to the poet was the occasion which inspired it?' are questions which must be addressed if we are to understand both the poem and the place it occupies in the author's life. I say again that Orpheus is centrally important to *Lycidas* and that *Lycidas* is Milton's most concise expression of his own role as a poet in a society that he feels must throw off the oppressive yoke not just of the bishops, the prelacy, but of the clerical hierarchy generally, in order that it may fulfil the destiny God has made available to it.

While it is obvious that *Lycidas* is an elegy because the occasion that inspired it was the creation of a volume commemorating the recently drowned Fellow of Christ's College (1630-37), Edward King, it is perhaps less obvious why it should employ the conventions of pastoral poetry. Christopher Hill provides the most convincing explanation for Milton's decision to form *Lycidas* as a pastoral poem.

> The advantage of the pastoral mode ... was that sharp criticisms could be made, and the key supplied to those in the know. The innocent would miss the point. (50.)

Of Sidney's *Arcadia* Fulke Greville wrote:

> this representing of virtues, vices, humours,

> counsels and actions of men in feigned and unscandalous images, is an enabling of freeborn spirits to the greatest affairs of state. (Hill, 50.)

It is important to note that Milton supplied the headnote to *Lycidas*--including "by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy then in their height"--only for the 1645 publication of his collection of poetry. The headnote was not, indeed could not have been, included in the 1638 commemorative volume, *Justa Edovardo King*. In 1638 Milton was only too aware of the danger of openly challenging the "savage censorship" which was "the concomitant of Charles I's patronage of the arts" (Hill, 19) and which would have been enforced by "the all-powerful [Arch]Bishop Laud" and the Star Chamber (Hill, 28).

> Laud was said to have refused licences to print Luther's *Table Talk*, Bishop Jewell's *Works*, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Bishop Bayley's *Practice of Piety*. .... [And] we know of many who deliberately refrained from publication before 1640--Sir Henry Spelman, Sir Simonds D'Ewes, Joseph Mede [Fellow of Christ's College (1614-38) during Milton's time there]: there must have been hundreds more. (Hill, 64-5.)

One of those who most powerfully influenced Milton in his pre-Cambridge years at St. Paul's School, the younger Alexander Gil, had been arrested and imprisoned by the then Bishop of London William Laud in 1628 for toasting the health of the assassin who killed the king's favourite, the Duke of Buckingham (Hill, 28). Milton thus had a first-hand knowledge of Laud's power and unwillingness to countenance any expression that might seem even remotely seditious, and I believe that the attitude toward the "corrupted clergy" expressed by *Lycidas* can be read as having been more than just remotely seditious. Indeed, Laud's persecution of Puritans was so keenly felt that he was eventually executed by the Long Parliament in 1645. But *Lycidas* was written for publication in 1638 when Laud's power was still at its peak. Thus, pastoral conventions with their inherent ambiguity and lack of specificity lend themselves brilliantly to what I propose was one of Milton's primary purposes in writing *Lycidas*. I agree with Christopher Hill when he reads *Lycidas* as "a tremendous denunciation of the dominant clique in the Church of England, the Laudians" (Hill, 50).

The second question raised above, 'how important was the occasion which directly inspired *Lycidas*?' is a very interesting because quite deceptive one. We might rather ask: '*what* was the occasion that inspired *Lycidas*?' It has been taken for granted (by Frye and Tillyard, for example; see p.68, above) that the occasion was the death of Edward King, but if that were true then Dr. Johnson's criticism might well be correct: "it is not to be considered the effusion of real passion" (Johnson, 335). But this assumption of the occasion is wholly mistaken even if only narrowly off the mark. Milton did not compose *Lycidas* in answer to a desire to mourn the premature death of Edward King; Milton composed *Lycidas* in answer to an invitation to write a poem mourning the death of Edward King. The occasion that inspired Milton's greatest pastoral elegy was not King's death, rather it was the decision made by King's Cambridge peers to publish a volume of poetry commemorating King's death and to invite John Milton to contribute. This is an important even if a rather fine distinction.

We know about the oppressively censorious atmosphere of England in the 1630s. We know about Milton's political and religious zeal, and about his knowledge of the uses of pastoral poetry to make sharp, covert criticisms.[30] Add to these the following: 1) While at Cambridge Milton "had some trouble with the college authorities ... [and was] rusticated for a short period. .... The man with whom Milton had been unable to get on was William Chappell, later made an Irish Bishop by Laud's favour" (Hill, 34); 2) Neither at Cambridge nor at any other time did Milton compose poems to royalty, although he did write "conventional Latin elegies on two bishops, the Vice-Chancellor and the university bedel" (Hill, 35); 3) Milton's junior contemporary, Edward King, often wrote verses in celebration of royal events between 1631 and 1637 (Hill, 35), and; 4) From this we might join Hill in concluding that "there is no reason to suppose that Milton was particularly fond of King, who had been made a Fellow of Christ's in 1630 - the Fellowship which Milton might have hoped for" (Hill, 49).

From the foregoing, I suggest that it is not unreasonable to conclude that Milton did not write *Lycidas* primarily to memorialize Edward King. This is not to say that he wrote *Lycidas* primarily to attack the Laudian Church. But it seems reasonable to say that he might have grasped at an opportunity to write a poem that would communicate the extent of his displeasure with the present state of the church without laying himself open to a charge of sedition. The invitation to contribute to *Justa Edovardo King* was exactly the thing to enable a freeborn spirit to comment on what was to him clearly the greatest of all possible affairs of state. And that might be just how Milton read the invitation, as an opportunity to champion the doves of Chaonia, to demonstrate the power of poetry--a power he had been cultivating all his life--to circumvent the censor, subvert Laudianism, and to spread the gospel of the Puritan political perspective.

As we have seen, Orpheus was never far from the surface of Milton's creative thinking during his early years as a poet. And of all Milton's works, *Lycidas* is probably the one in which Orpheus looms largest. His myth meanders through the entire poem. Like a morning-glory through a garden it sends its shoots to the surface in a pattern not at first easily discerned. His image has often been found to be the most dominant,[31] it is certainly the most demonstrably cohering.

Frye contends that "Milton was even by seventeenth-century standards an unusually professional and impersonal poet" (212). Yet studying *Lycidas* with the specific context of Milton's life as a seventeenth-century English Puritan revolutionary freshly established in our minds will enable us to see that the poem's force lies more in the attitude it conveys than in any precise statement it makes (Hill, 51). There is much more in this poem than the mere memorializing of a dead Cambridge Fellow, and what more there is reads as though it is of greater importance to its author than is the event which has ostensibly given rise to the occasion of his writing. What more the poem contains is the attitude that even in a "trivial-minded and mercenary society" (Mayerson, 195) the poet could reconfigure his social landscape and "repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright ... out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him..." (*Of Education*; Hughes, 631a). The attitude *Lycidas* conveys is one of true belief in the power of the poet to shape his society. This attitude is the same one we saw earlier in the work of Francis Bacon. It is an attitude informed by Milton's "elevated conception of the poet's role in society. He, no less than the preacher, could 'inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility'. ...Milton believed that, though church-outed, he still had a message for the people of England" (Hill, 63; *RCG*, Hughes,669-70). To convey that message he accepted the invitation presented by *Justa Edovardo King* and wrote *Lycidas*.

Surprisingly, no one has yet commented on the recollection of Orpheus to the reader's mind in the first two lines of the poem. "Yet once more, O ye Laurels, and once more/ Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy never sere" recollects the life and death of Orpheus as succinctly as possible.

Harkening back to *Elegy Six*, we know that the laurel is the tree of Phoebus Apollo, Orpheus' progenitor, and that the Ivy is associated with Bacchus, the deity to whom Orpheus' death is most commonly attributed. In only two lines the genesis and teleology of the poetic archetype is conjured, and is done so with extraordinary craft, as we realize when we return to the myth itself, as well as to *Elegy Six*, to remember the fact that in addition to being Orpheus' father Apollo is also him who preserves the poet's ability to sing after the Bacchanals send his severed head down the Hebrus. The image of a father who is at once the poet's source and his preservation after death is one that cannot be incidental to Milton's design. By starting *Lycidas* with so complete yet so cryptic an allusion to Orpheus, Milton invites us to recognize the figure that will be the key enabling us to join those in the know, and so draw from the poem the attitude he wishes to communicate despite the omnipresent danger of the censor.

It is worth making space here to speak of the reason Milton's attitude, that the poet can reconfigure his social landscape, is so important. There is the obvious reason; Milton felt himself born to be a poet, felt a duty to espouse the Christian Gospel as he interpreted it, probably intended even at this early date to write his great Christian epic, and so had a tremendous personal investment in elevating the conception of the poet in his "trivial-minded and mercenary society" (Mayerson, 195). But there is also a less obvious reason; Milton's Puritanism was a radical Protestantism that abhorred the mediatory role assumed by the Roman Catholic priest, and increasingly under Archbishop Laud by the Anglican minister. Milton's attitude entails a religious freedom undreamt of in a world in which the mediating vision of a priest is required. Without the dictates of the priest, society is free to hear the persuasions of the poet and "persuasion certainly is a more winning and more manlike [human?] way to keep men in obedience than fear" (*RCG*, Hughes, 640).

Milton feels compelled to offer forth surreptitiously what would be taken as a seditious expression if presented in a more straightforward manner, but he also wants to express his "concern ... generally with the life, death, and resurrection of the dedicated poet, and specifically with his own situation at the time" (Adams, 183). He gives voice to his compulsion to foretell the ruin of corrupted clergy after the relaxation of the censor, in 1641's *The Reason of Church Government Urged Against Prelacy*:

> But this I foresee, that should the church be brought under heavy oppression, and God have given me ability the while to reason against that man [Archbishop Laud?] that should be the author of so foul a deed, or should she, by blessing from above on the industry and courage of faithful men, change this her distracted estate into better days without the least furtherance or contribution of those few talents which God at that present had lent me, I foresee what stories I should hear within myself, all my life after, of discourage and reproach. (Hughes, 666b.)

Orpheus is, in *Lycidas*, the representative of the second of Milton's purposes, which is the need to resolve the twin anxieties of his concern over the place of the poet in seventeenth-century England, and his concern about the inability of virtuousness to guarantee God's justice in this world--as seen in the pre-mature death of the virtuous King, as also seen later in the slaughter of the Piedmontese commemorated in "Sonnet 18" (1655).[32] But Orpheus also serves the political expression Milton feels he must make by virtue of being the archetype of the priest's replacement.

Christopher Hill reminds us that "the essence of pastoral was ambiguity, something perhaps forgotten by those who continue to labour at the mysteries of *Lycidas*" (50). Milton's brilliant control of pastoral poetry enabled him to use this ambiguity to full advantage. Thus, when in lines

6-8 we discover the ostensible reason for the poem is that "Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,/ Compels me to disturb your season due:/ For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime..." we are not surprised to find that the poem is following the script originating in the myth of Orpheus. The ambiguity here lies in the identification of Lycidas with Eurydice. Just as Eurydice dies within the first ten lines of Golding's translation of Ovid's Orpheus, so the death of Lycidas is announced without delay. An awareness of the ambiguity inherent in pastoral is necessary so that we do not worry over the appropriateness of who is playing what mythic role within this poem.

But if Milton is following Orpheus' script closely, he is not afraid to make it his own. Where in Ovid we have two characters, in *Lycidas* we have only one. In Ovid, where Hymen declines to sing, in Milton we are asked "Who would not sing for Lycidas?" (10) with the implication being that any would mourn his passing with a song. And why not, for like the original, this new Orpheus "knew/ Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme" and so "He must not float upon his wat'ry bier/ Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,/ Without the mead of some melodious tear" (11-14). Like the original, the new Orpheus finds his own death in the water. We know that Orpheus' death is a qualified one, that his poetry does not die when he is dismembered and cast into the water but continues when his head rises to the surface and continues singing: "the severed head cannot be silenced" (Broadbent, 83). We know therefore what to expect for Lycidas.

Lines 15-24 commence the elegy in earnest, and so it is not surprising that here we find the strongest evidence for those readings which champion the concern for the poet's own mortality.

> Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well,
> That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,

> Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
> Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse,
> So may some gentle Muse
> With lucky words favor my destin'd Urn,
> And as he passes turn,
> And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.
> For we were nurst upon the self-same hill,
> Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.
> (15-24.)

Orpheus is kept constantly in the periphery of our imaginative vision. Compare these lines from *Lycidas* with the beginning of the song sung specifically by Orpheus in Book Ten of the Metamorphoses: "O Muse my mother, frame my song of Jove, for everything/ Is subject unto royall Jove..." (Golding, 10:153-4). Notice the structural parallel that sees Orpheus begin his song well after the commencement of his story in Book Ten with the commencement of the specifically elegiac song sung in *Lycidas*. Also, it is specifically to Jove that Orpheus dedicates his song, and it is from Jove that the speaker we will come to know as the "uncouth swain" expects the Muses to draw their inspirational power.

Here an echo is used to reinforce meaning. "Begin then, Sisters ... Begin" makes clear to us that the first lines were intended to set the stage, to conjure the archetypal myth with its attendant structure and characterization to our minds, but that the elegy is only now beginning in earnest. Yet the phrase "somewhat loudly sweep the string" serves notice that at no time in this poem will the archetype be drowned out. We are admonished to increase the volume of our song--narrowly, *Lycidas* itself but more extensively the revolutionary cause--against those forces that in the allegorization of the myth represent the downfall of civilization--in Milton's view, Archbishop Laud and the Church of England and, the source of their power, Charles I and his court.

In these lines we see another example of Milton exploiting ambiguity so that the gender of a character defies attempts at making it consistent. "Muse" conventionally indicates a feminine character, and so we take it to do in line 19; but in line 21 the Muse has become a male who, the swain hopes, will favour the swain's own memory as "he" [the Muse] passes. This is a strange confusion indeed unless we take into account the highly similar "confusion" that has occurred earlier in the poem. If we will allow Lycidas to assume the roles both of Orpheus and of Eurydice, then we can allow a Muse to be a "he": and *vice versa*.

The final moment of great import in lines 15-24 comes in the form of a traditional pastoral image. Lycidas and the swain "fed the same flock." They are shepherds. And they seem to be shepherds who have graduated from the flock they now seek to feed for they have also been "nurst upon the self-same hill." For all its traditional origins this metaphor is clearly intended to establish the relationship between the swain and Lycidas on the one hand, and Christ the archetypal shepherd on the other. This line also contrasts starkly with the image of the "hungry Sheep" we encounter much later in the poem. Unlike Lycidas' sheep, fed "by fountain, shade, and rill," the "hungry Sheep look up, and are not fed,/ But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,/ Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread..." (125-7). The image developed in both these passages is born of the Biblical axiom 'as ye sow, so shall ye reap' (Matt. 7:26). Because the latter sheep suffer "lean and flashy songs/ Grate[d] on ... scrannel Pipes of wretched straw" controlled by the "Wolf with privy paw" (123-4; 128) they will "rot inwardly and foul contagion spread." By contrast, because theirs has been the proper education of Bible-based Anti-Laudian Puritanism, Lycidas and Milton are able to properly Shepherd their flock and feed it with "Rural ditties .../ Temper'd to th'Oaten Flute" (32-3).

When we read lines 50-63 we are returned in earnest to the myth of Orpheus and in the process the connection between Orpheus and his typological equal in the Euhemeristic tradition (Mayerson, 192), Christ, is made quite obviously: "Thee Shepherd, thee the Woods, and desert Caves,/ With wild Thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown,/ And all their echoes mourn" (ll.39-41). Christ the Shepherd becomes Orpheus the Shepherd with the allusion to the "the woods and desert caves." Although it is certain that "desert" would in 1638 still have had the force that "deserted" now carries for us, a cave is always to be most closely associated with stone and so Orpheus' legendary ability to animate the woods and stones rises into view. We can compare this image with the one found in Book Seven of Paradise Lost where the force of "the Thracian Bard['s]" song was such that "Woods and Rocks had Ears/ To rapture" (7:34-6). Somewhere close in the reader's mind is an association with the Resurrection, when a great stone is rolled away from Christ's sepulchre without the application of physical force (Mark 16:3-4).

In these lines we again see Milton use ambiguity to great poetic effect. "Echoes" (41) refers not only to the mournful echoes reverberating from the woods and caves, it also refers to what the echoes mourn, and that is the Shepherd. 'It is thee, Shepherd, that all the echoes of the woods and caves mourn.' Since Orpheus is now established as a typological representative of Christ, and since Orpheus is considered in the mythographical tradition also to be a symbol of the rise of civilization, the echoes here mourned are the reverberations of past civilization, viz. the civilization of the primitive church, the original Shepherd's original flock. This connection is enhanced by the preceding lines (25-36), which cause us to understand that from good teaching comes further good teaching. The echo of the primitive church informs the song of the contemporary Puritan ministry.

The next several lines, with their Metamorphoses-like cataloguing of trees and plants, reinforce the connection just made between Christ and Orpheus by virtue of their proximity to "Thee Shepherd, thee the Woods, and desert Caves," but also by virtue of the extent to which seemingly all nature is made to feel the loss of Christ/ Orpheus/ Lycidas.

> The Willows and the Hazel copses green
> Shall now no more be seen,
> Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
> As killing as the Canker to the Rose,
> Or Taint-worm to the weanling Herds that graze,
> Or Frost to Flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
> When first the White-thorn blows;
> Such, Lycidas, thy loss to Shepherd's ear. (42-49.)

This is "the heavy change now thou art gone." We can not miss the Orpheus image in lines 42-44: willow and hazel trees fan their leaves to Orpheus' songs; but, now he is dead, no more. The death of Lycidas is as killing as is the caterpillar to the rose, the taint-worm to cattle, or freezing temperatures to flowers. But notice the diction: the death of Lycidas is as killing as are these sure killers, but to what? We are not told that his death will kill the rose, the kine, or the flower. Instead we hear that "Such, Lycidas, [is] thy loss to Shepherd's ear." The death of Lycidas is as killing to the Shepherd's ear as is the canker to the rose, et cetera. The ambiguity of this passage is amazing in its complexity even in a poem that traffics so heavily in that literary device. Lycidas is Orpheus, a singer of songs that can move even nature itself. But Lycidas/Orpheus is also Christ, who similarly affected nature when he "gave up the ghost" (Matt. 27: 50-51, 54). And yet it is Christ, the Shepherd, who most feels the loss of this powerful singer, because the singer's songs are those sung on behalf of Christ Himself. Recall "Milton's elevated conception of the poet's role in society" (Hill, 63), as being at least on a level with the preacher. Recall also the obligation he feels for the poet to sing his songs in support of Christ:

> These abilities [i.e. the talents of the poet] ... are of power beside the office of a pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind and set the affections in right tune, to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what he works and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his church, to sing the victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ, to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. (*RCG*, Hughes, 669-70.)

Thus the death of the poet-preacher, while unmistakably a killing loss to the natural world, is no less a loss to Him on whose behalf the poet-preacher would sing.

There is another important feature of the construction of this passage, and that is that it is a simile rather than a metaphor. "*As* killing *as*" these things, it will not deal the same death to the Shepherd's ear that the end of summer will to the flower. The use of a simile here demonstrates that the author is talking about a death of a qualitatively different order. It will not be the Shepherd's ear that dies from the loss of his poet's song, much less the Shepherd Himself, but he will feel the loss *as* acutely *as* death itself. The song sung on behalf of the Shepherd must be sung. For Milton it is and always has been a moral obligation. But it is a duty even more profoundly to be felt in these times in which the Second Coming is immanent, and Archbishop Laud and his prelates exert a "carnal tyranny of an undue, unlawful and ungospel-like jurisdiction" (*RCG*, Hughes, 684a). Time is running out and the need of poet-preachers to "inbreed ... in a great people the [soul-saving] seeds of virtue and public civility" is greater than at any other time. Thus the Shepherd, being as He is the tempering hand of Mercy in the administration of God's Justice, feels the loss of any who could convert those who follow the wrong path as acutely as He would feel His own death; but because a simile has been chosen rather than a metaphor we understand that the death of any such is not to be confused with His death. If England fails the test of hearing His message, "a season of barbarism [will] set in, the waters of Helicon [will sink] under ground, [but] according to the appointed vicissitude of things, they [will] break out and issue forth again, perhaps among other nations..." (Bacon, *Orpheus*, 13:113).

In lines 50-63, we encounter the poem's only explicit reference to Orpheus. It is used in a very unusual way in the poetry of John Milton. In lines 50 to 55 Milton locates the poem in Britain. The words "old Bards," "famous Druids," "the shaggy top of Mona," "where Deva spreads her wizard stream" all work to make us recognize that the Nymphs appealed to in line 50 are specifically patrons of British poets. In Sandys' term, Milton "Englishes" the myth of Orpheus. He equates the death of the English poet-priest Lycidas with that of Orpheus by equating Nymphs who should protect British poets with the foremost of the classical Muses, the patron of epic poetry, Calliope. But then we see the swain realize that he cannot hold at fault these British semi-divinities for their inability to do what even "the Muse herself that Orpheus bore," Calliope, could not do "for her enchanting son."

These lines have often been interpreted as the point at which Milton's concern for King's and his own mortality, even in the face of living virtuously, is most tellingly expressed. While such a reading is certainly available and ought not to be dismissed, it has too often overridden all other interpretations with the unfortunate result that Orpheus has been seen as merely an appendage to the poem and not the centrally important interpretive element he can be. Conventionally, "the Muse herself" has been taken for the ineffective power of destiny to protect one who lives the austere, devoted, life Milton and King had lived.[33] According to this interpretation, the central concern of the entire poem is introduced by these lines, and is expressed in the lines immediately following. I find it somewhat ironic that interpretations that would have the Orpheus image convey *Lycidas'* great central anxiety must do so by denying Orpheus his full contribution to the poem.

Interpretations that place lines 56 through 84 at the thematic heart of *Lycidas* invariably depend upon a curious misreading of lines 64-66: "Alas! What boots it with uncessant care/ To tend the homely slighted Shepherd's trade,/ And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?" The primary misreading here makes "the homely slighted Shepherd's trade" the mere construction of pastoral verses. By now we have seen the importance of the Shepherd's image in this poem, and it would involve an almost conscious act of the will to ignore all the poetic, theological, and cultural baggage "Shepherd" carries with it as a matter of course.[34] These interpretations centre Milton's concern on a desire to be an epic poet. They fail to consider the political and theological dictates of conscience that made that "desire" in fact a duty most keenly felt.

If we paraphrase the lines in question we may get a clearer view of the unlikeliness of the misreadings that support these familiar interpretations. 'Alas, what is the use of attending to the homely slighted Shepherd's trade with unceasing care and to austerely occupy oneself with poetry or song?'[35] Unless we would have Milton be redundant, we must read 'attending the homely slighted

Shepherd's trade' as conveying a meaning distinct from that of 'austerely occupying oneself in poetry.' I have declined to paraphrase "homely slighted Shepherd's trade" because any such action would limit the meaning of this phrase by affixing one meaning to the exclusion of others. The OED provides no fewer than four definitions for "homely" appropriate for Milton's usage. They are as follows: 1) Become as one of the household; familiar; intimate; at home with; 2) Such as belongs to home or is produced or practised at home (esp. a humble home); unsophisticated, simple; plain, unadorned, not fine; everyday, commonplace; 3) Kindly; 4) Without reserve or circumlocution; directly 'home'; straight to the point; plainly.

To privilege any one of these definitions of "homely" over the others, all of which were current during Milton's time, would be to impoverish the meaning of the phrase "homely slighted Shepherd." Taken cumulatively, the definitions of the sometimes-adjective, sometimes-adverb "homely" serve as a virtual summary of Puritan beliefs about God and religion. Unlike Archbishop Laud's Church of England, with its High Anglican emphasis on pomp and circumstance, and its repair, beautification, and consecration of church *buildings*, Puritanism wanted Christ to "become as one of the household," a personal, unmediated saviour with whom each right-reasoning individual would be "familiar, intimate, and at home." The Puritan emphasis was clearly on the plain and the commonplace. They wanted to make Christ an unexceptional presence, as it were, in their everyday lives. Hence, the "homely slighted Shepherd's trade" is very much more than the mere practice of pastoral poetry.

"Slighted" becomes, in this interpretation, a direct allusion to Laud's Church of England. The Shepherd and his trade of providing mercy and saving souls has been slighted, i.e. treated with indifference or disdain. The Church of

England has placed its emphasis on edifices rather than on people. It has been over-run by "trivial-minded and mercenary" prelates whose first concern is with their own material security.

> such as for their bellies' sake,
> Creep and intrude and climb into the fold.
>
> Of other care they little reckoning make
> Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
> And shove away the worthy bidden guest;
> Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to
> hold
> A Sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least
> That to the faithful Herdman's art belongs. (114-
> 121.)

The Shepherd's trade has been slighted by these blind mouths who know scarcely anything about the faithful herdman's art. Christ's ministry has been scorned by the official Church which has hired prelates who are ignorant of the true practice of ministering God's message, wherein the preacher becomes at most a persuasive assistant to the attentive reader of God's Word, rather than a dictator mediating between God and the individual.[36]

My interpretation also takes into account another feature of Milton's syntax. To say "the homely slighted Shepherd's trade" is not the same thing as saying 'the trade of the homely slighted Shepherd.' The latter phrase is more specific, and can have only one meaning: the poet attends to the trade, or affairs, of another. In this construction he cannot make these affairs his own. But when the poet 'tends to the affairs of the Shepherd' he can, as he must, make these affairs his own. Again, ambiguity plays an important role in enhancing the poem's attitude. With Milton's syntax both readings are available: the 'trade' is the Shepherd's, and it is the poet's--simultaneously. The distinction between the Shepherd and His poet is again blurred, without being dissolved. Thus, Milton emphasizes the poet's Christian duty, all but preaches it out loud by contrasting it to Laudian 'popery,' and its endurance is assured by the distinction between the ever-lasting Shepherd and his properly educated flock. Finally, then, we see that in truth the explicit presence of the classical archetype Orpheus is arguably the most powerfully Christian expression in the poem.

In lines 75-84 yet another of the poem's many Orphean tendrils breaks the surface. Phoebus' reproach to the poet's concerns over his decision to dedicate himself to "the homely slighted Shepherd's trade" is yet another expression of Puritan theology. This passage on fame has also been too often misread due to the over-emphasis of the identification between Milton and Edward King to the detriment of the identification of Milton's social mission in the poem.

> Comes the blind Fury with th'abhorred shears,
> And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"
> Phoebus repli'd, and touch'd my trembling ears;
> "Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
> Nor in the glistering foil
> Set off to th'world, nor in broad rumor lies,
> But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
> And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
> As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
> Of so much fame in Heav'n expect thy meed." (75-84.)

Fame has been wholly misunderstood, Phoebus tells us. It is not a quality of this world, nor is it something to be conferred by or judged of humankind. Rather, fame is the recognition conferred by the omniscient God in recognition of the individual's good works--"each deed." This emphasis on good works appears quite self-evidently in Paradise Lost where the Son is "by Merit more than birthright Son of God" (3:309). Hill points out that "Milton's concept of sonship rejected Calvin's God, who 'elects those whom he chooses for sons ... according to the good pleasure of his will, without any regard to merit' [CPW, 1:597; VI:19, 441]" (Hill, 297). Milton "thought of God as 'a most indulgent Father governing his church, as a family of sons'-'no servants but all sons'" (Hill, 296). Phoebus' insistence that the swain correctly understand the dependence of fame on "each deed" anticipates the emphasis Milton will later place on the role good works will play in enabling the individual to join God and the Son "all in all" (PL, 3:341; 6:732).

Merritt Hughes notes the interpretation that the "blind fury is Atropos, the Fate who cuts the threads of men's lives after her sisters [Clotho, the fate who had the care of birth, and Lachesis, of life] have spun them out" (Hughes, 122n). And Mulryan agrees that Woodhouse and Bush "are surely right in saying that Milton is not '... confusing Atropos, the third of the Fates, with the Furies, but is saying that Atropos has the character of a Fury'" (Mulryan, 38). But there is no tradition of either a blind Fate or a "blind Fury" in the mythological tradition (Mulryan, 39) so we must question the author's motive here. By making the Fury, let it be the Fate Atropos, blind, Milton makes the end of life unpredictable. Even the Fury herself will not know at which point she is cutting the "thin-spun life." Consequently, we must be ever ready to go before the "perfect witness of all-judging Jove/ As he pronounces lastly on each deed." Unlike the Roman Catholic church where a death-bed conversion can gain the heavenly fame a misspent life might otherwise deny one, and unlike the Episcopal church where forgiveness is too strongly connected to the worldly fame gained from a pious appearance, the Puritan faith is an active, 'homely' system of belief where one's fame, i.e. heavenly reward, depends upon the good works performed when the chance was available--before the shearing of the tenuous, thin-spun, life.

The classical pastoral tradition is not the only influence on Milton's poem. The influence of the Spenserian poet Michael Drayton (1563-1631) can also be seen in *Lycidas*. This influence, restricted though it is, is interesting in its connection with Orpheus. "Camus, reverend Sire, [goes] footing slow,/ His Mantle hairy, and his Bonnet sedge" through lines 103-4. In Drayton's poetry "Orpheus is referred to by the personified Cam" (Mayerson, 195n). This connection will become critical to our understanding of the last lines of the poem, wherein "the uncouth Swain ... twitch[es] his Mantle blue" and sets out "to fresh Woods and Pastures new." In lines 103-4 Milton is again 'Englishing' the myth of Orpheus, by re-naming the poetic archetype with a distinctly British name, but also by conjuring images directly from Golding's Ovid. Upon the death of Orpheus "the Nymphes of brookes and woods uppon theyr streames did sayle/ With scattred heare about theyr eares, in boats of sable sayle" (Golding, 11:51-2). The "Mantle hairy" recalls to the reader the "scattred heare about [the Nymphs] eares," as the "sable sayle" raised upon the death of the archetype anticipates the "sable shroud" the swain expects "some gentle Muse" to "bid fair peace to" be upon after his own death (19-22).

It is not coincidence that "the self-same hill [that] nurst .. the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill" (23-4) from which the poet-Shepherds Lycidas and Milton drew their education is identified with this Englished Orpheus. While Cam is an English Orpheus he is also Camus, "god of the river Cam, represent[ing] Cambridge University" (Hughes, 123n) where Milton and King were exposed, directly or indirectly, to the teachings of William Perkins, "by general consent the leading English Puritan theologian," Hugh Broughton, Andrew Willett, Arthur Hildersham, Francis Johnson, George Downham, Samuel Ward, John Smyth, Thomas Taylor, and Paul Baynes, "a very radical collection of Puritans" (Hill, 32) as well as Joseph Mede and Robert Gell.

Thus what seems to be a mere tip of the figurative hat to Milton's alma mater carries much deeper significance when we connect the two aspects of the river god. Ministering, lay preaching, especially in the form of poetry for Milton, is an essential aspect of Puritanism. Making Cam serve double duty as both the archetype of poetry and the source of right-reasoned teaching will enable Milton to "temper... th'Oaten Flute" so that he can "tend the homely slighted Shepherd's trade."

St. Peter, "the Pilot of the Galilean lake," carries with him "two massy Keys ... of metals twain/ (The Golden opes, the Iron shuts amain)" (109-11). We have already seen how we are to gain access to the golden key--through our good works. The lines immediately following, 112-131, give us a picture of those who will be locked out. St. Peter, representative of the primitive Church, "shook his Mitred locks, and stern bespake:/ How well could I have spar'd for thee, young swain" (112-13). The next several lines tell us who the church would exchange ("spare") for Lycidas. These are those who choose a career in the clergy "for their bellies' sake" and whose teachings, as we have seen, are so barren that "the hungry Sheep look up and are not fed" (114; 125). These are the typical prelates against whom Milton's poem is directed, even under the censorship of 1638, and who are "the false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly ... are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). The image is fortified when Milton writes of "the grim Wolf with the privy paw" (128).

These "grate[rs of] ... lean and flashy songs ... on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw" (123-4) have little chance but to face the Iron Key. Omniscient, "all-judging Jove" will of course send the message for "that two-handed engine at the door/ ... to smite once, and smite no more" (130-1). Of this we are left in no doubt, but Milton does not overstep his theological prerogative and presume to do

God's judging for Him. He tells us that the "two-handed engine at the door/ *Stands ready* to smite...." the prelacy. Although the final decision remains, as it must, with God, no room is left for doubt as to what the judgement will be.[37]

The catalogue of flowers we encounter in the following lines returns the myth of Orpheus to our thoughts, so that when we read "pensive head" in line 147 we are thinking of "the severed head [that] cannot be silenced" (Broadbent, 83). And so we ought to be, since we again encounter a very clear allusion to the survival of Orphean poetry beyond the death of the poet.

> Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
> Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor,
> So sinks the day-star in the Ocean bed,
> And yet anon repairs his drooping head...
> ....
> Through the dear might of him that walk'd the waves,
> Where other groves and other streams along,
> With Nectar pure his oozy Locks he laves,
> And hears the unexpressive nuptial Song,
> In the blest Kingdoms meek of joy and love. (166-77.)

Just as Orpheus was borne up out of the water by one who is at once the poet's source and his preservation after death, so Lycidas will have the opportunity through the dear might of Christ to repair his drooping head, bathe, and join those "redeemed from the earth" who will sing "a new song before the throne" as they "be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him" at the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 14:3, 19:7). This new song, belonging as it does to an entirely new kingdom (the post-apocalyptic earth inherited by the meek [Matt. 5:5, Rev.14) cannot be sung but by the redeemed (Rev. 14:3) who are those who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4). And it is to these, the redeemed, the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb, "who wander in that perilous flood" of everyday life that Lycidas and so the poet-priest "shalt be good" and teach and minister (184-5).

Lycidas does convey some consolation in immortality. Like the 'day-star who sinks in the Ocean bed and yet anon repairs his drooping head' (168-9), like Orpheus who "cam to Hebrus, and (a woondrous thing) ... his livelesse toong did make/ A certaine lamentable noyse as though it yit spake" (Golding, 11:54-6), so Lycidas will henceforth be "the Genius of the shore,/ [and] In thy large recompense, ... shalt be good/ To all that wander in that perilous flood" (183-5). For his good works on earth as well as perhaps for the untimeliness of his death (as Eurydice was granted a reprieve because she too had her "destinye/ [too] swiftly reeled up" [Golding, 10:32-3]) Lycidas will be compensated by being in the afterlife, the Genius of the shore, what he would have been best suited for in life, a spiritual guide for those seeking the straight gate and the narrow way (Matt. 7:14).

But while "Lycidas goes from an earthly paradise by way of Hell to Heaven" (Berkeley, 206), thereby seeming to complete the Orphean shape of the poem, the final eight lines actually further enhance the archetype when Milton reinforces our recognition of his greater concern with the here and now than with eternity.

> Thus sang the uncouth Swain to th'Oaks and rills,
> While the still morn went out with Sandals gray;
> With eager thought warbling his Doric lay:
> And now the Sun had stretch't out all the hills,
> And now dropt into the Western bay;
> At last he rose, and twitch't his Mantle Blue:
> Tomorrow to fresh Woods, and Pastures new. (186-93.)

This seeming intrusion into the poem of the third person narrative ought to remind us of the similar sensation experienced when the narrator re-appears to commence the eleventh book of Ovid's Metamorphoses. Suddenly, we remembered that Orpheus was just a singer of a song and that there was a world outside the one that he had reconfigured. Similarly here, the 'intrusion' of the third person narrator tells us that the preceding verses have been a song sung by a poet who exists even as he sings in a world of other concerns. Just as the reappearance of Ovid does not negate the achievement of Orpheus' reconfiguration, neither does the appearance of a narrator lessen the poetic and political effect of the swain's verses.

The swain rather than Lycidas is associated with Orpheus, when we read that the uncouth Swain "sang ... to th'Oaks" as similarly Orpheus had "such wood ... drawen about him" (Golding, 10:148). The image of Orpheus is thereby extended beyond association with the dead Edward King to the poet himself, thus enabling him to identify his own with the archetype's ability to use the poet's task, divine song, to reconfigure his own psychological landscape, but also and more importantly the spiritual and social landscape of 1638 England.

The importance of our connecting Milton's use of Drayton to 'Englished' allusion to the myth of Orpheus here becomes important. In "The Significance of Milton's 'Mantle Blue'" James Forrest argues convincingly that this phrase makes the swain "a native son" of Britain by virtue of its probable derivation from the "sophisticated bardic discrimination in [British] oral tradition" (43b). Simply put, by making the swain's mantle blue Milton conferred upon him the authority of the bard in the druidical Celtic tradition native to the British Isles (Forrest, 45). Thus he compresses into one unspecific reference the authority both of the classical Orphean tradition and the native Bardic tradition. From such an authority, the "foretell[ing of] the ruin of our corrupted clergy" ought not to be ignored.

But even cryptic prophecy has its end, and so the swain must now move on. When he closes his poem by telling us that the uncouth swain, who has been the voice by whom we have been given the foregoing denunciation and prophecy, will move on "Tomorrow to fresh Woods and Pastures new" he may be telling us that he recognizes the need for his attention to be directed to other concerns. And he is certainly telling us that as he moves on to "fresh woods and pastures new" he will do so, like Bacon before him, as a centrally important figure in the society he would re-create, Orpheus-like, with the divine song that he cannot do other than sing.

Conclusion

When I called Milton a "true believer" early in chapter three I was attempting to draw attention to what I see as the greatest difference between Bacon and Milton. Both men were great thinkers, voracious readers, knowledgeable and prolific writers; but Milton I would also call naive.

Naivety and great intelligence seem at odds with one another. Perhaps, you might argue, this is a modern development. I have seen no evidence to support such a view. Clearly Bacon was not naive. There is no reason to think that he believed he would escape punishment if only he admitted to his bribe taking. This would have been a naive belief. But it was not his, nor could it have been--at any time. Yet Milton does possess both naivety and great intelligence in the years before the revolution.

He truly believes he can make life better for all by adopting his Orphean position as central spokesperson for what he sees as the most civilized ideology. He is not naive in the sense that he believes everyone will listen, or that no heads will have to roll. But he is naive in the sense that he believes the sheer force of his belief, and the power that that belief will impute to his poetry and his prose, will be sufficient when combined with his superlative eloquence to eventually mould his society into a collective of "properly qualified Christians." This is the naivety of all revolutionaries, and is only called naivety by those of us who believe that humankind is less worthy than revolutionary dogmas would have us believe. The revolutionary starts from this assumption: that humanity is essentially redeemable, and that such redemption is the worthiest cause. This certainly describes John Milton.

But if Bacon was not the true believer in humanity's essential goodness (or at least 'worthiness') that Milton was, he all the same felt as Milton did that he could reform his society by adopting an Orphean persona. From this position he would re-order people's thinking; he would cause them to encounter the world in such a way that they could not but see the rightness and the justice of the Crown's governance. Bacon's was a more modest undertaking than was Milton's. To succeed, he had only to inculcate the seemingly neutral doctrine of empiricism in the minds of a majority of Britons so that the power and authority of the Crown could then be exercised according to divine principles revealed to all by that doctrine. Although the doctrine itself may have admitted any, its employment on behalf of the Crown could have been done with sufficient subtlety and grace, and where necessary subterfuge, to admit only the mightiest of the ruling class. ("I ever bare a mind ... to serve her Majesty..." Letters & Life, 1:108; see p.30 above). To the rest of society, all that would be apparent would be the rightness of that ruling class' claim to power. By assuming the role of Orpheus, central spokesperson for a new philosophy of civilization, Bacon sought to immortalize that civilization.

Bacon and Milton both possess a quality that is rarely if ever spoken of in reference to pre-twentieth century writers. They are both excellent readers. This is the quality that enables them to move out of the shadow cast by Sir Philip Sidney and other like-minded readers of mythology, especially the myth of Orpheus, into the light of application. I am tempted to write that Bacon and Milton engaged in 'applied mythology,' something akin to applied psychology perhaps, wherein they used myth to convince their 'patient,' the then-presently wrong-headed people of Britain, that he should change his whole way of thinking in order that he may lead an ultimately healthier life. To call Bacon a mythographer certainly fails to satisfy description of all he used myth to accomplish. To say of Milton that he was well read in the classics or that he used classical allusion to advantage similarly fails to describe his feat.

For both Bacon and Milton myth was made to connect the past with the present. It was used to wrest control of human destiny from the darkness of ignorance and uncontrolled chance. As I said above (pp.1-4), neither man met with complete success. But nor can either be said to have completely failed. In a strictly literary analysis, both could be said to have succeeded brilliantly because in the writing of both men myth does perform the function of connecting the past to the future, of making the future an object of human control, and in particular the myth of Orpheus is read and employed with much success as it enables each man to assume a central position in reforming his society. But as neither Bacon nor Milton was using mythology and the myth of Orpheus to address strictly literary concerns, it would be injudicious to limit our understanding of their adaptations strictly to the arena of the written page.

I am going to end this thesis as unfashionably as I started it, with the same sweeping statement I made in the introduction. Francis Bacon and John Milton changed the world. At least partly because of the way these two visionaries called upon the mythic truths of the past to influence their present, they effected their future to such an extent that we think and live some of their changes in our time. The success of their adaptation of the persona of Orpheus is evident in their continued importance in studies of their respective periods. Were it not for Shakespeare it does not seem too fanciful to say that Bacon would be more studied than any other thinker and writer of the turn of the seventeenth-century. And as Milton has no Shakespeare with which to contend, studies of the middle of the seventeenth-century invariably begin and end with him. As Orpheus before them, as they had themselves the readerly prowess to ascertain, they made themselves central figures in the civilization of their times.

Notes

1. Another reason, beyond the temporal, to use Golding's edition when studying Ovid is that his language is very much richer and more fulsome, because more rhythmic and more melodic and less prosaic; in short it is closer kin to the poetry, the song, it describes, than are any of the available modern versions of the Metamorphoses. That it is so can be testified to easily by any who would care to compare Golding's translation to, for example, A.D. Melville's 1986 translation for Oxford University Press, or Rolfe Humphries' 1955 edition for Indiana University Press.

2. Just as an aside, Milton was an early advocate of Baconian science. "By 1628 Milton had taken a firm stand as a Baconian..." (Hill, 34). Hill also tells us that Milton considered Bacon "one of 'the greatest and sublimest wits in sundry ages'" (36).

3. All page references to Milton's shorter poems will be to their location in the Merritt Hughes edition of 1957. References to Milton's prose will be to this volume as well except where material is drawn from the Yale edition of the Complete Prose Works of John Milton, cited in the text as CPW.

4. There is an obvious pattern to the choice of Titius, Tantalus, Danaus' daughters, and Ixion as mythological sufferers named in connection with Orpheus. Each of them is presented as suffering an extreme form of torment which has been decreed by the gods (usually by the supreme god, Zeus, himself), yet Orpheus' song is so powerful that while it is heard it holds in abeyance the punishment each sufferer must endure. This not only speaks to the power of the song, which as we see is great indeed, but it also strongly suggests its divine origins in its ability to overturn, however temporarily, even divine decree. Orpheus will assure us of these origins later (10.153-4).

5. The backward glance is an important feature in at least one other widely known myth--the story of Lot and his wife. There, Lot's wife is turned into a pillar of salt for disobeying God's command not to look back at the city they had been instructed to flee (Gen. 19:17, 26). Just as proving Bacon's and Milton's reading experience is beyond the scope of this thesis, so is comparing these stories and/or looking for other examples from mythologies. But the similarity of the two instances is striking, and may be due to a Greek influence on Middle Eastern mythology inasmuch as there was a school of thought in classical Greece which held that the past was visible before us but that the future was forever sneaking up from behind to surprise us. Combined with common superstitions regarding the legitimacy of predicting the

future (who is or is not authorized to prophecy) this belief may account for the inherent danger in mythology of the backward glance.

6. Sandys too calls Orpheus a prophet (11.74), although admittedly not as often as does Golding.

7. This interpretation of Eve as a source of all humanity's woe, and therefore a type of the enemy within, can be found in Medieval Mystery plays such as the second play, the Draper's *The Creation, and Adam and Eve*, in the Chester cycle. A typical example of this reading of Eve is the following exchange between Adam and Eve:

> Eva: Alas! This adder hath done me nye(harm).
> Alas! Her red(advice) why did I?
> Naked we bene bothe for-thye(therefore),
> And of our shape ashamed.
>
> Adam: Yea, soothe said I in prophesie,
> When thou wast taken of my body,
> Mans woe thou woldest be witlie(knowingly);
> Therefore thou wast so named.
> (Quoted from Happe, 72.)

The translations are Happe's, and he also provides a note explaining Adam's last line, above: "The implication of Adam's remark is that [Eve] was the mother of all who live and sin." (Note 22, p.654.)

Doubtless much of the impetus to read Eve as an enemy from within comes from Genesis 3:17 which reads:

> And unto Adam [God] said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.

8. Professor Martin calls to my attention the fact that "Bacon was a frequent visitor to Leicester House (where Sidney lived) in the early 1580s, when the Apology was written, circulated in MSS, and the subject of much discussion among Sidney and his acquaintances." In other words, Bacon would have been "utterly and intimately familiar with Sidney's line on poesy." My thanks to Dr. Martin for attaching these comments to a draft copy of this thesis. Bacon's inclusion in the fine-tuning of Sidney's Apology makes his eventual movement beyond Sidney's position both more likely, and more remarkable.

9. So Bacon is identified on the frontispiece of each volume of his Works, collected and edited by Spedding, Ellis, and Heath. Works was published differently in the United States than it was in Britain, where it appeared in only seven volumes but where Spedding's The Letters and Life of Francis Bacon is appended to the Works as volumes eight to fourteen whenever citation is made to one of these volumes. Contrarily, in the United States, Houghton Mifflin published the Works in fifteen volumes, with the result that citations referring to any volume higher than seven are still referring to what appears in the British publication in the first seven volumes. As I have only been able to obtain the American edition, it is to this edition that all my own citations will refer, and I hope that by calling my reader's attention to this fact I can prevent her or him having the kinds of problems with reference that I have had myself in cross-referencing Bacon's writing. Whenever possible I will refer specifically to the work and the place within the work under present discussion. For example Bacon's discussion of the Idols of the Tribe can be found in his *Novum Organum* at Book 1. Aphorism 41, which position will be cited directly as *N.O.*, 1.41, in this thesis. This seems likely to be easier for a reader to access than Works, 8:76-7 as there are many publications other than the Works in which Bacon's writing made be examined. Occasionally it has been necessary to retain citations which refer to the British edition when such citations are borrowed directly from the work of a critic who has used that edition.

There does exist one Table cross-referencing the British and the American editions, in Francis Bacon, the State, and the Reform of Natural Philosophy, (Cambridge U.P., 1992), by Dr. Julian Martin, to whom I am very grateful for clearing up my own confusion regarding this publishing oddity.

10. For specific examples supporting this assertion, see "Of the True Greatness of Britain," (probably dated about 1608) Works, 13:221-55, or "A Brief Discourse Touching the Happy Union of the Kingdoms of England and Scotland," (1603) Letters and Life, 3:90-99.

F.J. Levy, in a well written and convincing article entitled "Francis Bacon and the Style of Politics," associates Bacon with "the Essex group [who, Levy argues,] sought ... some method by which to analyze and comprehend a crisis in which the Queen, led astray (as they believed) by a group of self-interested courtiers, was taking the commonwealth down a road leading toward destruction and rejecting the offers of service from those most capable of saving the situation, such as Essex, and [Fulke] Greville and Francis Bacon" (151). Such a claim almost invites speculation as to whether Bacon's first loyalty was to the Crown of England or to the Commonwealth of England itself, except for the facts that, first, for Bacon a strong England so depended on a strong Crown that the two were inseparable in his mind, and second, recall the early expression (in a letter to his Uncle, Lord Burghley, in 1592, see Letters and Life, 1:108-09) of his desire to dedicate his life to service of the Crown.

Perhaps the most irrefutable proof that Bacon's allegiance was ever and always first to the Crown is his prosecution of the Earl of Essex, the patron who helped Bacon when even Bacon's own uncle, Lord Burghley, and cousin, Robert Cecil, would not do so. Attributing his allegiance first and always to the Crown is surely no less likely an explanation for this prosecution than is a condemnation of Bacon as a cad who felt no personal loyalty to a man who had been as much a role model and friend as a patron. Furthermore, it is more consistent with the description Levy offers of Bacon as a "political humanist" in the Italian style adopted by Sir Philip Sidney and Essex himself.

11. Also to be found in the *Novum Organum* is Bacon's famous denunciation of those qualities of the mind that he saw as being most culpable in misdirecting philosophic inquiry, which qualities he refers to as the Idols of the Mind. These "Idols which beset men's minds" he divides into four classes: those of the Tribe; of the Cave; of the Market-place; and of the Theatre.

The Idols of the Tribe can best be described as being a term used to signify the fallible nature of human kind. As Bacon puts it, "all perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the individual and not according to the measure of the universe" because humanity tends to overrate itself. In response to this false valuation Bacon replies: "it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of all things" *N.O.*, Bk.1. Aphorism 41.

"The Idols of the Cave are the idols of the individual...." In other words, this class of idols refers to the tendency of the individual to see things from her or his own unique perspective "besides the errors common to human nature in general" *N.O.*, 1.42.

"The ill and unfit choice of words [which] wonderfully obstructs the understanding" Bacon calls the Idols of the Market-place. This imaginative name comes from the idea that it is during the "commerce and consort" of people in the market-place where we might most evidently observe the corruption of the understanding by "words ... imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar" *N.O.*, 1.42.

The Idols of the Theatre immigrate into people's minds "from the various dogmas of philosophies, and also from wrong laws of demonstration." The name comes from Bacon's assertion that "all the received systems [for gaining knowledge about the world] are but so many stage-plays, representing worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic fashion" *N.O.*, 1.44.

12. For a detailed discussion of the extension of irresistibility from natural law to civil law see Julian Martin's Francis Bacon, the State, and the Reform of Natural Philosophy, especially chapter six.

13. Briggs' book, Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature, (1989), is only the most recent expression of the understanding that Bacon's prose serves as a model of his theoretical position on scientific experimentation, learning, and pedagogy. Other commentators who have noticed at least some aspect of this connection can be found in Essential Articles for the Study of Francis Bacon, (1968), ed. Brian Vickers (see especially Ronald Crane's "The Relation of Bacon's Essays to his Program for the Advancement of Learning," and Anne Righter's "Francis Bacon," therein); Stanley Fish's "Georgics of the Mind," in his Self-Consuming Artifacts, (1971); Lisa Jardine's Discovery and the Art of Discourse (1974); and Stephen Daniel's "Myth and the Grammar of Discovery in Francis Bacon," in Philosophy and Rhetoric, 15(4), Fall (1982).

14. Undoubtedly, "truth" is not arbitrary even in the last years of the twentieth-century. But the impact of post-structuralist and post-modern thinking on the concept of "truth" as a capital-"T" singularity can no longer be lightly dismissed nor easily refuted. As there was no similar systematic assault on the notion of truth as a corollary of the existence of a single divine Creator in the seventeenth-century, I feel justified in calling attention to the distinction between our own era and the earlier one as being defined in part by the broad ranging support given at that time, even among the foremost philosophers of the day, for the belief in one God and one truth.

Although there was no systematic attempt to refute the philosophy of monotheism in the seventeenth-century similar to the kind of attempt we may categorize under the heading of post-structuralism (I'm thinking particularly of the implications for monotheism entailed by post-structuralism's 'refutation' of logo-centrism), D.C. Allen's Doubt's Boundless Sea (1964) provides a very interesting account of a variety of attacks on the then dominant system of belief which attacks Allen unifies under the heading of "Atheism." "Atheism" in seventeenth-century England signified not specifically 'non-belief' as it does today but beliefs alternative to the mainstream belief in the Christian God as a Heaven-dwelling judge who presides over the collective and individual fate(s) of humanity. Hence, in the context of seventeenth-century England atheism can no more be considered a unified system of thought (or, more precisely, a 'system of belief' as Bacon's essay "Of Atheism" suggests) than it can in today's world. It is not even so systematic as Allen's chapter headings would suggest, and certainly it does not compare to the communities of discourse we see formed around the headings "post-structuralism" and "post-modernism."

15. The whole of Paterson's argument in "Bacon's Myth of Orpheus: Power as a Goal of Science in *Of the Wisdom of the Ancients*" rests on the supposition that Bacon had engaged himself in a contest for power with the establishment forces of Christianity--in all their physical, social, and political manifestations.

16. The notion of Baconian science being an act of "de-coding," primarily nature but also secondarily the wisdom of the ancients, is a prominent theme in Briggs' Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature.

17. Whether or not this belief is genuine is itself, for us, rather a moot point since it functions in Bacon's writing as if it were in fact a genuine belief. In other words, the question is an epistemological one; From 'what is a belief?' arises 'How do we verify its status as a belief?' Notice that the second of these is a different question, albeit only subtly so, than the one that Bacon scholars, especially those who would dismiss Bacon's Christianity, have been wrongheadedly trying to answer until now: i.e. 'How do we verify Bacon's belief in his professed belief?' Or, if you prefer, 'Does he really believe what he says he does?' In answer to this, I reply, how can it matter, since the belief, whether sincerely held or insincerely expressed, functions in his work exactly as it would if it were sincerely held? Even if Bacon's professed belief in the Fall could be shown to be closer to what we would call a rhetorical device than to an act of Christian witnessing, does this lessen the force of Bacon's decision to turn to mythology for an existing model in answer to his desire to "build... in the human understanding a true model of the world"? Clearly, it does not.

18. The role prescribed for Bacon's new, Orphean, philosopher is precisely the role we would expect to find prescribed by the philosophy of the man described by F.J. Levy as a "political humanist." In his "Francis Bacon and the Style of Politics" Levy argues that the "doctrine of 'political humanism' ... had only just achieved the status of orthodoxy" in the 1590s. "Political humanism may be described as an amalgam of an Italian-based 'new philosophy of political engagement and active life' with older chivalric ideas about the relationship between a monarch and the aristocracy. It had always been a lord's duty to give counsel to his king. Now, added to that, was the strong conviction that it was a citizen's duty to serve his common weal" (147; the quotation 'new philosophy of...' is from Hans Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance, rev. ed. [Princeton, 1966]). Levy argues quite effectively for an understanding of the style of

Bacon's essays born out of an appreciation for his attempts to develop an understanding of the "style" of Elizabethan politics according to what Levy calls the doctrine of political humanism.

Levy's "political humanism" seems strongly analogous to what Quentin Skinner refers to as "political Aristotelianism" (p.396) in chapter 12, *Political Philosophy*, of The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy. According to Skinner's treatment of the subject, the Italian model from which Levy argues Bacon--via Sidney, Essex, et al--adopts his own political ideal takes its lead from the adaptation to the Italian city-state of Aquinas' refurbishing of Aristotle's arguments in the *Politics*. Skinner writes that Aquinas "draws the conclusion '... the best form of government, whether of a kingdom or a city-state, must therefore be one in which a single individual is placed in command of everyone else and rules them virtuously, but in which there are others under him who are also capable of governing virtuously, and in which all the citizens are involved in public affairs, not merely as electors of their rulers but as potential members of the government themselves' [Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. P. Caramello, 1963]. The best type of polity, in short, will be a 'well-mixed' or bene commixta form of monarchy..." (Skinner, 398).

The Italian humanism, and the theory of its concomitant form of government, from which Bacon drew so much inspiration is also clearly elucidated in chapters seven through nine of volume one of Skinner's The Foundation of Modern Political Thought (Cambridge U.P., 1978).

In a still useful work on Humanism in an English context, Humanism and the Social Order in Tudor England, (U. of Chicago P., 1954), Fritz Caspari notes that "Whatever their shortcomings, it is clear that English humanists were deeply affected by the Platonic ideal of a good and just state which is *ruled by an elite of guardians and philosophers*" (11, my emphasis). Of the early humanists, those from whom Bacon may be said to have absorbed much of his own active political philosophy, Caspari writes: "The pattern which they gave to English thought on education and society was to remain characteristic, though not unchallenged or unchanged, for centuries to come" (15).

19. The meanings of "putrefaction" current in Bacon's time, according to the O.E.D. are as follows: 1) The action or process of putrefying; the decomposition of animal and vegetable substances, with its attendant unwholesome loathsomeness of smell and appearance; rotting, corruption. b) Decomposition of tissues or fluids in a living body, as in ulceration, suppuration, or gangrene. 2) In reference to inorganic matter, esp. in Alchemy: The disintegration or decomposition of a substance by chemical or other action; also, the oxidation or corrosion of metals, etc. 3)

Decomposed or putrid matter. 4) Moral corruption and decay.

The first definition above invites interpretation of Bacon's expression of a desire to 'retard putrefaction' as the ancestral expression of the desire to create refrigeration--an idea singularly in step with science and its off-spring, technology. Definition "b" admittedly invites interpretation of "retardation of ...putrefaction" as more or less a medical expression, but even Victor Frankenstein considers the pursuit of immortality to be outside the realm of medicine.

The fourth definition is so obviously unsupportive of Paterson's thesis that it warrants no further comment. As for the third, Bacon's *Advancement* itself provides an example of the use of "putrefaction" in this context. In Book 1, section 6, paragraph 11 of the *Advancement* Bacon writes of "Salomon ... compil[ing] a natural history of all verdure, from the cedar upon the mountain to the moss upon the wall (which is but a rudiment between putrefaction and an herb)...." So, Bacon is saying that moss is the initial stage of putrefaction of an herb which suggests that he views putrefaction much as a modern scientist (not one of the mad, Frankensteinian variety) would, as a progressive degeneration of still living tissue, just as much as of formerly living tissue.

20. It might be more accurate to say that during the years of 1641-60 Milton delayed rather than suppressed answering his poetic calling. On a draft copy of my thesis Professor Gay called to my attention the fact that an early biography by Edward Phillips found the earliest fragment of Paradise Lost, Satan's speech to the Son, to have been written around 1642. Dr. Gay also points out that outlines for Paradise Lost were entered in the Trinity MS in 1640-1, and that Milton was composing sonnets and psalm paraphrases throughout his prose period. I agree that Milton's prose is replete with "affirmations of the vocation" of poetry. The question then arises, can I say that Milton "suppresses" his conviction that he was born to be a poet? I believe that I can and must. The elevation of his prose to the place of primary output during these years logically entails the demotion or relegation of his poetic output to at most a secondary position. Or, alternatively, during the years of his prose writing Milton suppressed his desire to be a poet. This is in no way meant to deny the force of Dr. Gay's observations. Rather, I wish to call to my reader's attention the fact that Milton's political concerns were so strong that they caused him to demote, or suppress, his writing of poetry in order that he might communicate in the lingua franca of contemporary politics. This fact in no way implies that Milton's poetry is not also extremely amenable to political interpretation. In truth, it suggests that political interpretation of the poetry, especially the early poetry, is entirely appropriate because the decision to write primarily overtly political prose tells us how important politics were to Milton at the

time when his poetic career was on the verge of becoming firmly established. The decision to communicate in prose rather than in poetry reflects a recognition in Milton of the form most appropriate for his audience. We may recall at this point that according to Sidney's definition of the poet the prose-writing Francis Bacon would qualify as one; therefore Milton's decision to write prosaically rather than poetically can not imperil his status as a poet even during his prose writing years. And given Milton's supreme command of all aspects of language, we surely would not argue that for him form dictated substance.

21. The depth of this conviction is revealed in 1637's *Ad Patrem*, in which he defends his decision to be a poet, and in 1629's *Elegia Sexta*, in which he expresses his belief in the sacredness of the poetic vocation, and is the subject of much of this chapter.

22. Having set the precedent of bringing modern American politics into my thesis, I must now acknowledge the existence of an obvious, and politically very powerful, "Christianity" in the form of what has come to be called 'the religious right' and that includes such noteworthy (if not for entirely positive reasons) figures as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. I acknowledge these characters, and the political power they wield, but consider it to be of a completely different order than the kind of potential for political power Milton saw in Christianity. Whereas Milton's was a politics only powerful insofar as it brought the teachings of Christ into the works of humanity, Falwell's 'Moral Majority,' for example, has sought power for its own sake through the strength of its ability to marshall votes (more often in the marketplace than in politics per se, but the implicit warning seems not to have been lost on even that bright light Ronald Reagan) to a single cause. Whereas the power of which Milton wrote emanated from God and was of such ferocity that all anyone could hope for was the strength of character and intellect to correctly understand it, the power Pat Robertson would bring into modern politics is the "power" of a prayer to turn a hurricane away from the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. The success of Robertson's demonstration can go unremarked.

23. See, for example, Berkeley's chapter "The Typology of the Damned Bark," 113-64; esp. 148.

24. See Allen Grossman's "Milton's sonnet 'On the late massacre at Piemont': a note on the vulnerability of persons in a revolutionary situation," for an interpretation of this sonnet that would see Milton questioning the ability of the Protestant English Parliament and even God's own ability to protect the oldest Protestant sect in Europe.

25. Mulryan does not attempt to prove, as indeed he cannot prove, that Milton had assuredly read and absorbed Conti's work. But he does make a very strong case for the purpose of his paper, which purpose is

> simply to examine a number of images from Milton's *Lycidas*, and to point up passages of similar interest in Conti's *Mythologiae* and Cartari's *Imagini*. I want first to indicate that the mythographers made a great deal of mythological information available in Milton's time, and second to suggest that Milton might either have used these very passages as the raw material for his images in *Lycidas*, or else that these passages might have guided and channelled his reading (or rereading) in classical sources. In other words, Milton, after reading excerpts from Greek and Roman literature that Conti or Cartari provided as relevant to a particular myth, might have been moved to reexamine the classical poems in their entirety, or to consult other poems by the same authors. (37).

I say again that Mulryan's is a very strong case, and add to that the observation that he does not overlook the opportunity presented by Milton's Horton period for the kind of in-depth study of original sources that might have made reading the works of the mythographers superfluous. Rather, Mulryan takes this into account, and recalls the evolution of the general familiarity with classical mythology in the period from the mid-point of the sixteenth century forward. From this aspect of his argument, which entails as a specific implication the idea that Milton was writing with an awareness of his audience--a reasonable assumption--Mulryan calls to our attention the obvious fact that although Milton had a Horton period his readers would not have had, and it follows that Milton might reasonably have written his poetry in a way that recalled to his audience not what was readily familiar to him, but rather what would have been familiar to them.

26. Dr. Martin has quite rightly called to my attention the fact that Milton himself becomes censor for the Protectorate. But to this I would add the observation that Areopagitica, Milton's powerful statement in favour of freedom of the press, stops well short of advocating a position of absolute freedom. Only by judiciously censoring out seditious material such as could arouse support for the kind of regime that would suppress the widespread freedoms for which Milton argues in Areopagitica would a government be able to maintain those freedoms. For Milton, such seditious material and the kind of regime it would support are both described by the term "papal."

27. Williamson quotes from Eleanor Tate's "Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*--Balance, Progression, or Dichotomy?" in Modern Language Notes, 76 (1961):588.

28. The translations of "*L'Allegro*" as "the cheerful man" and "*Il Penseroso*" as "the contemplative man" (which I prefer to the more commonly used "pensive man") I owe to Dr. J.F. Forrest, in whose graduate seminar on Milton I first began to understand these poems.

29. "Amid the weapons of war ... our songs avail as much as, they say, the doves of Chaonia when the eagle comes." This translation finds its original in Virgil's Ninth Eclogue and is offered in John Mulryan's "Milton's *Lycidas* and the Italian Mythographers." There, Mulryan calls our attention to the fact that the protagonist of the Ninth Eclogue, a poem with which Milton was certainly familiar, is named Lycidas, and that in that poem "the bleakest of Virgil's Eclogues ... the power of poetry to shape events is called into serious question" (40).

30. Hill demonstrates that the tradition of using pastoral poetry for social criticism was an illustrious one in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Sidney, Spenser, George Wither, and William Browne are all poets who crafted pastoral poems to reflect evils to be found in the society of their authors. In fact, the Spenserian poet William "Browne directly anticipates *Lycidas* by his reference to 'The prelate in pluralities asleep/ Whilst that the wolf lies preying on his sheep'" (Hill, 50).

31. See, for example, Adams; Mayerson; Stanwood.

32. Hughes dates the sonnet in 1655; the massacre occurred April 24, 1655.

See Grossman's "Milton's sonnet 'On the late massacre in Piemont': a note on the vulnerability of persons in a revolutionary situation" for a good discussion of Milton's need to make meaningful what seems an essentially meaningless act.

33. See, for example, Evans The Road from Horton, 43; and Tillyard's Milton, 83.

34. "All society is personified in the Shepherd, who is at once the humblest of its members and Christ, the King. He is the representative of all men, the cult-hero, whose death is the means of expiation and renewal of life" (Mayerson, 199).

35. The OED cites Milton as the only example of the following definition of "meditate": to occupy oneself in song or poetry. While the dictionary does trace the evolution of this

definition back to a similar Latin construction in one of Vergil's *Eclogues*, there can be no doubt that attributing a definition to a single use is a fairly bold act of interpretation. Nonetheless, the proximity of "the Muse" to "meditate" in Milton's line (being as she is the Muse of epic poetry) when combined with the authority of Vergil's use makes this a likely interpretation.

36. "There was a difference between the moral approach, the emphasis on conduct, of the liberal Calvinists, and the sacrementalism of papists and Laudians. For the Calvinist the emphasis is always on the individual, his conscience, his personal relation to God: for the papist or Laudian the emphasis is on the church, the community led by its clergy, united by its sacraments. The Laudian emphasis on the holiness of church buildings which must be consecrated, on the sanctity of the altar, to which men must bow, on confession to a priest, on the absolute necessity of baptism; elevation of the liturgical side of worship and set forms of prayer as against preaching, the belief that salvation came only through the church and its sacraments--all these were reversions from the Protestant emphasis on the supremacy of the individual conscience and individual study of the Scriptures, from the Protestant critique of any mediators between man and God." Hill, 271.

37. There has been a fair amount of ink spent in the search for the conclusive argument supporting specific interpretations of what Milton meant by his "two-handed engine." Hill offers the following imaginative contributions:

> Critics who complain of Milton's obscurity here forget the censorship. He could hardly say in plain terms either that Laud should be impeached (if the engine equals the two Houses of Parliament); or executed (if it is an axe, or Michael's two-handed sword P.L. VI. 250-1), or a two-handed sceptre, or the 'twa-handed sweard' given to John Knox by the martyr George Wishart ... ; or called to account by the two kingdoms of England and Scotland. The two-handed weapon might also be the Old and New Testaments, or the law and the gospel, or 'the sword of his mouth' (Revelation 1:16 2:10) or a shepherd's rod and crook--all various ways of describing the Protestant preaching which Laud was thought to be trying to suppress (51).

Although this might seem a comprehensive list, Forrest has yet a further suggestion to make, which he convincingly advances in "Milton and the Divine Art of Weaponry." There he argues that "the engine's two-handedness may serve to epitomize the marriage of Christ and the Church" (136), and more pointedly that the two-handed engine is a metaphor for "the priest's proper role in the saving of souls" which includes a healthy dollop of mercy to temper justice (137-8).

I must confess that I like all these interpretations, and can see good reason for accepting any one of them. I also agree with J.M. Evans that "a sensibility as passionately concerned as Milton's was with the social and political realities of his immediate situation ... could scarcely have [found satisfaction in] an eschatological solution to a contemporary problem" (*Lycidas*, 43-4). All this being said, I decline to advance any specific translation of Milton's phrase on the authority of Hill's reminder that "the whole beauty of the pastoral mode, under a strict censorship, was that meanings could be multiple, slippery, conveying an attitude rather than a precise statement" (51).

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